THE WORKS OF THE LEARNED AND PIOUS AUTHOR OF The Whole Duty of Man.

Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the end of that Man is peace. Psal. 37. 37.



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MDCCXXVI.

A

PREFACE

To the ensuing

TREATISE,

SHEWING

The Necessity of Caring for the Soul.

Sect. 1. THE only intent of this ensuing Treatise is to be a short and plain direction to the very meanest readers, to behave themselves so in this world, that they may be happy for ever in the next. But because 'tis in vain to tell men their duty, till they be persuaded of the necessity of performing it, I shall, before I proceed to the particulars required of every Christian, endeavour to win them to the practice of one general duty preparatory to all the rest; and that is the consideration and CARE of their own SOULS, without which they will never think themselves much concern'd in the other.

2. MAN, we know, is made up of two parts, a BODY and a SOUL; the Body only the husk or shell of the Soul, a lump of flesh, subject to many diseases and pains while it lives, and at last to death it self; and then 'tis so far from being valued, that 'tis not to be endured above ground, but laid to rot in the earth. Yet to this viler part of us we perform a great deal of care; all the labour and toil we are at, is to maintain that. But the more precious part, the Soul, is little thought of, no care taken how it fares, but as if it were a thing that nothing concern'd us, is left quite neglected, never consider'd by us.

3. This carelesness of the Soul is the root of all the sin we commit, and therefore whosoever intends to set upon a Christian course, must in the first place amend that. To the doing whereof there needs no deep learning, or extraordinary parts; the simplest man living (that is not a natural fool) hath understanding enough for it, if he will but act in this by the same rules of common reason, whereby he proceeds in his worldly business. I will therefore now briefly set down some of those motives, which use to stir up our care of any outward thing, and then apply them to the Soul.

4. There be FOUR things especially which use to awake our care; the first is the worth of the thing, the second the usefulness of it to us, when we cannot part with it without great damage and mischief, the third the great danger of it, and the fourth the likelihood that our care will not be in vain, but that it will preserve the thing cared for.

5. For the first, we know our care of any worldly thing is answerable to the Worth of it; what is of greatest price, we are most watchful to preserve, and most fearful to lose; no man locks up dung in his chest, but his money, or what he counts precious, he doth. Now in this respect the Soul deserves more care, than all the things in the world besides, for 'tis infinitely more worth; first, in that it is made after the image of God, it was God that breathed into man this breath of life, Gen. 2. 7. Now God being of the greatest excellency and worth, the more any thing is like him, the more it is to be valued. But 'tis sure that no creature upon the earth is at all like God, but the Soul of man, and therefore nothing ought to have so much of our care. Secondly, the Soul never dies. We use to prize things according to their durableness: What is most lasting is most worth.

The Worth of the Soul.

Now

Now the Soul is a thing that will laſt for ever: When wealth, beauty, ſtrength, nay, our very Bodies themſelves fade away, the Soul ſtill continues. Therefore in that reſpect alſo the ſoul is of the greateſt worth; and then what ſtrange madneſs is it for us to neglect them as we do? We can ſpend days, and weeks, and months, and years, nay, our whole lives in hunting after a little wealth of this world, which is of no durance or continuance, and in the mean time let this great durable treaſure, our Souls, *be ſtolen from us by the* Devil.

The Miſery of loſing the Soul.

6. *A ſecond* motive *to our care of any thing is the* USEFULNESS *of it to us, or the great miſchief we ſhall have by the* loſs *of it. Common reaſon teaches us this in all things of this life. If our hairs fall, we do not much regard, becauſe we can be well enough without them: But if we are in danger to loſe our eyes or limbs, we think all the care we can take little enough to prevent it, becauſe we know it will be a great miſery. But certainly there is no miſery to be compared to that miſery that follows the loſs of the Soul. 'Tis true, we cannot loſe our Souls, in one ſenſe, that is, ſo loſe them, that they ſhall ceaſe to be; but we may loſe them in another, that we ſhould wiſh to loſe them even in that; that is, we may loſe that happy eſtate, to which they were created, and plunge them into the extremeſt miſery. In a word, we may loſe them in* Hell, *whence there is no fetching them back, and ſo they are loſt for ever. Nay, in this conſideration our very* Bodies *are concerned, thoſe darlings of ours, for which all our care is laid out: For they muſt certainly after death be raiſed again, and be joyned again to the* Soul, *and take part with it in whatever ſtate: If then our care for the* Body *take up all our time and thoughts, and leave us none to beſtow on the poor* Soul, *it is ſure the* Soul *will for want of that care be made for ever miſerable. But it is as ſure, that that very* Body *muſt be ſo too. And therefore if you have any true kindneſs to your* Body, *ſhew it by taking care for your* Souls. *Think with your ſelves, how you will be able to endure* everlaſting burnings. *If a ſmall ſpark of fire, lighting on the leaſt part of the Body, be ſo intolerable, what will it be to have the whole caſt into the hotteſt flames? and that not for ſome few hours or days, but for ever? So that when you have ſpent many* thouſands *of years in that unſpeakable torment, you ſhall be no nearer coming out of it, than you were the firſt day you went in: Think of this, I ſay, and think this withal, that this will certainly be the end of neglecting the* Soul, *and therefore afford it ſome care, if it be but in pity to the* Body, *that muſt bear a part in its miſeries.*

The Danger the Soul is in.

7. *The third* Motive *to the care of any thing is its being in* DANGER. *Now a thing may be in danger two ways; firſt, by* enemies *from without: This is the caſe of the* ſheep, *which is ſtill in danger of being devoured by* wolves; *and we know that makes the ſhepherd ſo much the more watchful over it. Thus it is with the ſoul, which is in a great deal of Danger in reſpect of its* enemies: *Thoſe we know are the* world, *the* fleſh, *and the* Devil; *which are all ſuch noted enemies to it, that the very firſt act we do in behalf of our* Souls, *is to vow a continual war againſt them. This we all do in our* baptiſm; *and whoever makes any truce with any of them, is falſe not only to his Soul, but to his* vow *alſo; becomes a forſworn creature: A conſideration well worthy our laying to heart. But that we may the better underſtand what danger the ſoul is in, let us a little conſider the* quality *of theſe enemies.*

8. *In a war, you know, there are divers things that make an enemy terrible: The firſt is* ſubtilty *and cunning, by which alone many victories have been won; and in this reſpect the* Devil *is a dangerous adverſary; he long ſince gave ſufficient proof of his* ſubtilty, *in beguiling our firſt parents, who yet were much wiſer than we are; and therefore no wonder if he deceive and cheat us.* Secondly, *the* watchfulneſs *and* diligence *of an* enemy *makes him the more to be feared; and here the* Devil *exceeds: It is his trade and buſineſs to deſtroy us, and he is no loiterer at it,* he goes up and down ſeeking whom he may devour, 1 *Pet.* 5. 8. *he watches all opportunities of advantage againſt us, with ſuch diligence, that he will be ſure never to let any ſlip him.* Thirdly, *an* enemy *near us is more to be feared than one at a* diſtance: *For if he be far off, we may have time to arm, and prepare our ſelves againſt him, but if he be near, he may ſteal on us unawares. And of this ſort is the* fleſh, *it is an enemy at our doors, ſhall I ſay? nay, in our boſoms, it is always near us, to take occaſion of doing us miſchiefs.* Fourthly, *the* baſer *and* falſer *an* enemy *is, the more dangerous. He that hides his malice under the ſhew of friendſhip, will be able to do a great deal the more hurt. And this again is the fleſh, which like* Joab *to* Abner, 2 *Sam.* 3. 27. *pretends to ſpeak* peaceably *to us,* but wounds us to death; *'tis forward to purvey for pleaſures and delights for us, and ſo ſeems very kind, but it has a* hook *under that* bait, *and if we bite at it, we are loſt.* Fifthly, *the number of* enemies *makes them more terrible; and the* world *is a vaſt army againſt us: There is no ſtate or condition in it, nay, ſcarce a creature which hath not at ſome time*

 or

or other fight against the Soul: *The* honours *of the world seek to wound us by* pride, *the* wealth *by* covetousness, *the* prosperity *of it tempts us to forget* God, *the* adversities *to* murmur *at him. Our very* table becomes a snare *to us, our meat draws us to* gluttony, *our drink to* drunkenness, *our* company, *nay, our nearest* friends *often bear a part in this war against us, whilst either by their examples or persuasions they entice us to sin.*

9. *Consider all this, and then tell me, whether a Soul thus beset hath leisure to* sleep: *Even* Delilah *could tell* Samson, *it was time to* awake, *when the* Philistines were upon him. *And* CHRIST *tells us,* If the good man of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken up, *Matt.* 24. 43. *But we live in the midst of thieves, and therefore must look for them every hour, and yet who is there among us, that hath that common providence for this precious part of him, his Soul, which he hath for his house, or indeed the meanest thing that belongs to him? I fear our souls may say so to us, as Christ to his Disciples,* Matt. 26. 40. What? could ye not watch with me one hour? *For I doubt it would pose many of us to tell, when we bestowed one hour on them, though we know them to be continually beset with most dangerous enemies. And then, alas! what is like to be the case of these poor Souls, when their adversaries bestow so much care and diligence to destroy them, and we will afford none to preserve them? Surely the same as of a besieged town, where no watch or guard is kept, which is certain to fall a prey to the enemy.* Consider this, ye that forget God, *nay, ye that forget your selves, lest he* pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you, *Psal.* 50. 22.

10. *But I told you there was a* second *way, whereby a thing may be in danger, and that is from some disorder or distemper within it self. This is often the case of our* bodies, *they are not only liable to outward violence, but they are within themselves sick and diseased. And then we can be sensible enough that they are in danger, and need not to be taught to seek out for means to recover them. But this is also the case of the* Soul, *we reckon those parts of the body* diseased, *that do not rightly perform their* office; *we account it a sick palate that tastes not aright, a sick stomach that digests not. And thus it is with the* Soul, *when its parts do not rightly perform their* offices.

11. *The parts of the* Soul *are especially these three; the* UNDERSTANDING, *the* WILL, *and the* AFFECTIONS. *And that these are disordered, there needs little proof; let any man look seriously into his own heart, and consider how little it is he knows of spiritual things, and then tell me whether his* Understanding *be not dark; how much apter is he to* will evil *than* good, *and then tell me whether his* Will *be not* crooked? *and how strong* desires *he hath after the pleasures of sin, and what* cold *and* faint *ones towards God and goodness, and then tell me whether his* Affections *be not* disordered, *and rebellious even against the voice of his own reason within him? Now as in bodily diseases, the first step to the cure is to know the cause of the sickness; so likewise here it is very necessary for us to know how the* Soul *first fell into this* diseased condition, *and that I shall now briefly tell you.*

12. GOD *created the first man* Adam *without* sin, *and indued his* Soul *with the full* knowledge *of his* duty; *and with such a strength, that he might, if he would, perform all that was required of him. Having thus created him, he makes a* COVENANT *or Agreement with him to this purpose,* That *if he* continued in obedience to God, *without committing sin, then first, that* strength *of* Soul *which he then had, should still be continued to him; and* secondly, *that he should never die, but be taken up into* Heaven, *there to be happy for ever. But on the other side, if he committed sin, and disobeyed God, then both he, and all his children after him should lose that knowledge, and that* perfect strength, *which enabled him to do all that God required of him: And* secondly, *should be subject to* death, *and not only so, but to eternal damnation in Hell.*

The first Covenant.

13. *This was the* Agreement *made with* Adam *and all* mankind *in him (which we usually call the* FIRST COVENANT) *upon which God gave* Adam *a particular* commandment, *which was no more but this, that he should not eat of* one *only* tree *of that* Garden *wherein he had placed him. But he by the persuasion of the Devil eats of that tree, disobeys God, and so brings that curse upon himself, and all his posterity. And so by that one* sin *of his he lost both the full* knowledge *of his duty, and the* power *of* performing *it. And we being born after his* image, *did so likewise, and so are become both* ignorant *in discerning what we ought to do, and* weak *and unable to the doing of it, having a backwardness to all good, and an aptness and readiness to all* evil; *like a sick* stomach, *which loaths all wholesom food, and longs after such trash, as may nourish the disease.*

14. And

14. *And now you see where we got this sickness of Soul, and likewise that it is like to prove a deadly one, and therefore I presume I need say no more, to assure you our Souls are in danger. It is more likely you will from this description think them hopeless. But that you may not from that conceit excuse your neglect of them, I shall hasten to shew you the contrary, by proceeding to the* fourth *motive of Care.*

That our Care will not be in Vain.

15. *That* fourth motive *is the* likelihood *that our* CARE *will not be in* VAIN, *but that it will be a means to preserve the thing cared for; where this is wanting, it disheartens our* Care. *A physician leaves his* patient *when he sees him past* hope, *as knowing it is then in vain to give him any thing: But on the contrary, when he sees hope of recovery, he plies him with medicines. Now in this very respect we have a great deal of reason to take care of our Souls, for they are not so far gone, but they may be recovered, nay, it is certain they will, if we do our parts towards it.*

16. *For though by that sin of* Adam *all mankind were under the sentence of eternal condemnation, yet it pleased God so far to pity our misery, as to give us his Son, and in him to make a new covenant with us, after we had broken the first.*

The second Covenant.

17. *This* SECOND COVENANT *was made with* Adam, *and us in him, presently after his fall, and is briefly contained in those words,* Gen. 3. 15. *where God* declares, That THE SEED OF THE WOMAN SHALL BREAK THE SERPENT's HEAD; *and this was made up, as the first was, of some mercies to be afforded by God, and some duties to be performed by us.*

18. *God therein promises to send his only* Son, *who is* God equal *with himself, to earth, to become* Man like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, *and he to do for us these several things:*

19. First, *to make* known *to us the* whole will *of his* Father; *in the performance whereof we shall be sure to be accepted and rewarded by him. And this was one great part of his business, which he performed in those many sermons and precepts we find set down in the* Gospel. *And herein he is our* PROPHET, *it being the work of a* Prophet *of old not only to* foretel, *but to* teach. *Our duty in this particular is to hearken diligently to him, to be most ready and desirous to learn that will of God which he came from* Heaven *to reveal to us.*

20. *The* second *thing he was to do for us, was to* satisfie God *for our* sins, *not only that one of* Adam, *but all the sins of all mankind that truly repent and amend, and by this means to obtain for us forgiveness of sins, the favour of God, and so to redeem us from* Hell and eternal *damnation, which was the punishment due to our sin. All this he did for us by his death. He offered up himself a Sacrifice for the* sins of all those *who heartily bewail and forsake them: And in this he is our* PRIEST, *it being the* Priest's *office to* offer sacrifice for the sins of the people. *Our duty in this particular is, first, truly and heartily to repent us of, and forsake our sins, without which they will never be forgiven us, though Christ have died.* Secondly, *stedfastly to* believe, *that if we do that, we shall have the benefits of that* sacrifice of his; *all our sins, how many and great soever, shall be forgiven us, and we saved from those eternal punishments which were due unto us for them.* Another *part of the* PRIEST's office *was* blessing *and* praying *for the people; and this also Christ performs to us. It was his special commission from his Father to bless us, as St.* Peter *tells us,* Acts 3. 26. God sent his Son *Jesus* to bless you; *and the following words shew wherein that blessing consists, in* turning away every one of you from his iniquity: *Those means which he has used for the turning us from our sins, are to be reckoned of all other the greatest blessings; and for the other part, that of* praying, *that he not only performed on earth, but continues still to do it in Heaven,* He sits on the right hand of God, and makes request for us, *Rom.* 8. 34. *Our duty herein is, not to resist this unspeakable blessing of his, but to be willing to be thus blest in the being* turned from our sins, *and not to make void and fruitless all his* prayers *and* intercessions *for us, which will never prevail for us, whilst we continue in them.*

21. *The* third *thing that* Christ *was to do for us, was to* enable *us, or give us* strength *to do, what God requires of us. This he doth,* first, *by taking off from the hardness of the law given to* Adam, *which was never to commit the least sin, upon pain of damnation, and requiring of us only an* honest *and* hearty endeavour *to do what we are able, and where we fail, accepting of* sincere repentance. Secondly, *by sending his* Holy Spirit into our hearts *to govern and rule us, to give us strength to overcome temptations to sin, and to do all that he now under the Gospel requires of us. And in this he is our* KING, *it being the office of a* King *to govern and rule, and to subdue enemies. Our duty in this particular is to give up our selves obedient subjects of his, to be governed and ruled by him, to obey all his laws, not to take part with any rebel, that is, not to cherish any one sin; but diligently to pray for his* grace *to enable us to subdue all, and then carefully to make use of it to that purpose.*

22. Lastly,

22. Lastly, *He has purchased for all that faithfully* obey *him, an* eternal glorious *inheritance, the* Kingdom *of* Heaven, *whither he is gone before to take possession for us.* *Our duty herein is to be exceeding careful, that we forfeit not our parts in it, which we shall certainly do, if we continue impenitent in any sin.* Secondly, *not to fasten our* affections *on this world, but to raise them according to the precept of the Apostle,* Col. 3. 2. Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; *continually longing to come to the possession of that blessed inheritance of ours, in comparison whereof all things here below should seem vile and mean to us.*

23. *This is the sum of that* SECOND COVENANT *we are now under, wherein you see what* Christ *hath done, how he executes those* three great offices *of* KING, PRIEST, *and* PROPHET: *As also what is required of us, without our faithful performance of which, all that he hath done shall never stand us in any stead; for he will never be a* Priest *to save any, who take him not as well for their* Prophet *to* teach, *and their* King *to* rule *them; nay, if we neglect our part of this* Covenant, *our condition will be yet worse than if it had never been made; for we shall then be to answer, not for the breach of law only, as in the* first, *but for the abuse of mercy, which is of all sins the most provoking. On the other side, if we faithfully perform it; that is, set our selves heartily to the obeying of every precept of Christ, not going on wilfully in any one sin, but bewailing and forsaking whatever we have formerly been guilty of, it is then most certain, that all the forementioned benefits of Christ belong to us.*

24. *And now you see how little reason you have to cast off the* CARE *of your* SOULS, *upon a conceit they are past cure, for that it is plain they are not; nay, certainly they are in that very condition, which of all others makes them fittest for our care. If they had not been thus* REDEEMED *by* CHRIST, *they had been then so hopeless, that care would have been in vain; on the other side, if his Redemption had been such, that* all *men should be saved by it, though they live as they list, we should have thought it needless to take care for them, because they were safe without it. But it hath pleased God so to order it, that our care must be the* means, *by which they must receive the good even of all that* Christ *hath done for them.*

25. *And now, if after all that God hath done to save these* Souls *of ours, we will not bestow a little* care *on them our selves, we very well deserve to perish. If a* physician *should undertake a patient that were in some desperate disease, and by his skill bring him so far out of it, that he were sure to recover, if he would but take care of himself, and observe those rules the physician set him, would you not think that man weary of his life, that* would refuse to do that? *So certainly that man is weary of his* Soul, *wilfully casts it away, that will not consent to those easie conditions, by which he may save it.*

26. *You see how great* kindness *God hath to these Souls of ours, the whole* TRINITY, FATHER, SON, *and* HOLY GHOST, *have all done their parts for them. The* FATHER *gave his only* Son, *the* SON *gave Himself, left his glory, and endured the bitter death of the* Cross, *merely to keep our* Souls *from perishing. The* HOLY GHOST *is become as it were our Attendant, waits upon us with continual offers of his grace, to enable us to do that which may preserve them; nay, he is so desirous we should accept those offers of his, that he is said to be* grieved *when we refuse them,* Ephes. 4. 30. *Now what greater disgrace and affront can we put upon God, than to despise what he thus values? that those souls of ours, which Christ thought worthy every drop of his* Blood, *we should not think worth any part of our care? We use in things of the world to rate them according to the opinion of those who are best skilled in them: Now certainly* God, *who made our* Souls, *best knows the* worth *of them, and since he prizes them so high, let us (if it be but in reverence to him) be ashamed to neglect them. Especially now that they are in so hopeful a condition, that nothing but our own carelesness can possibly destroy them.*

27. *I have now briefly gone over those* four Motives *of care I at first proposed, which are each of them such as never misses to stir it up towards the things of this world; and I have also shewed you how much more reasonable, nay, necessary it is they should do the like for the* Soul. *And now what can I say more, but conclude in the words of* Isaiah, 46. 8. Remember this, and shew your selves men? *that is, deal with your* Soul *as your* reason *teaches you to do with all other things that concern you. And sure this common* justice *binds you to; for the Soul is that which furnishes you with that reason, which you exercise in all your worldly business; and shall the Soul it self receive no* benefit *from that* reason, *which it affords you? This is, as if a* master *of a* family, *who provides food for his servants, should by them be kept from eating any himself, and so remain the only starved creature in his house.*

28. *And as justice ties you to this, so* mercy *doth likewise; you know the poor Soul will fall into endless and unspeakable miseries, if you continue to neglect it, and then it will be too late to consider it. The last refuge you can hope for is* God's mercy, *but that you have despised and abused. And with what face can you in your greatest need beg for* his *mercy to your* Souls, *when you would not afford them your* own? *No, not that common* charity *of considering them, of bestowing a few of those idle* hours *you know not (scarce) how to pass away, upon them.*

29. *Lay this to your hearts, and as ever you hope for* God's pity, *when you most want it, be sure in time to* pity *your selves, by taking that due care of your* precious Souls, *which belongs to them.*

30. *If what hath been said have persuaded you to this so* necessary *a* duty, *my next work will be to tell you how this* care *must be imployed; and that, in a word, is in the doing of all those things which tend to the making the Soul happy, which is the end of our* care, *and what those are I come now to shew you.*

THE

GENERAL TITLES.

b Magi-

GENERAL TITLES.

A TABLE

A TABLE OF THE CONTENTS

Of the several *CHAPTERS* or *PARTITIONS* in this Book, which according to this Division, by reading one of these Chapters every *Lord's Day*, the whole may be read over *thrice in the Year.*

 Pride,

The TABLE.

A TABLE of the PRAYERS.

FINIS.

THE Whole Duty of Man.

SUNDAY I.

Of the Duty *of* Man *by the Light of Nature, by the Light of Scripture: The three great Branches of Man's Duty, to God, our Selves, our Neighbour: Our Duty to God; Of* Faith, *the Promiſes, of Hope, of Love, of Fear, of Truſt.*

THE Benefits purchaſed for us by *Chriſt*, are ſuch as will undoubtedly make the ſoul happy; for eternal happineſs it ſelf is one of them: But becauſe theſe benefits belong not to us, till we perform the condition required of us, whoever deſires the happineſs of his ſoul, muſt ſet himſelf to the performing of that condition. What that is I have already mentioned in the general, *That it is the hearty, honeſt endeavour of obeying the whole will of God.* But then that will of God, containing under it many particulars, it is neceſſary we ſhould alſo know what thoſe are; that is, what are the ſeveral things that God now requires of us, our performance whereof will bring us to everlaſting happineſs, and the neglect to endleſs miſery.

Of the Light of Nature.

2. Of theſe things there are ſome, which God hath ſo ſtamped upon our ſouls, that we naturally know them; that is, we ſhould have known them to be our Duty, though we had never been told ſo by the Scripture. That this is ſo, we may ſee by thoſe Heathens, who having never heard of either Old or New Teſtament, do yet acknowledge themſelves bound to ſome general duties, as, to worſhip God, to be juſt, to honour their parents, and the like; and as St. *Paul* ſaith, *Rom.* 2. 15. *Their conſciences do in thoſe things accuſe or excuſe them*; that is, tell them whether they have done what they ſhould in thoſe particulars, or no.

3. Now though Chriſt hath brought greater light into the world, yet he never meant by it to put out any of that natural light, which God hath ſet up in our ſouls: Therefore let me here, by the way, adviſe you not to walk contrary even to this leſſer light, I mean, not to venture on any of thoſe acts, which meer natural conſcience will tell you are ſins.

4. It is juſt matter of ſadneſs to any Chriſtian heart, to ſee ſome in theſe days, who profeſs much of religion, and yet live in ſuch ſins, as a meer Heathen would abhor; men, that pretending to higher degrees of light and holineſs than their brethren do, yet practiſe contrary to all the rules of common honeſty, and make it part of their Chriſtian liberty ſo to do; of whoſe ſeducement it concerns all that love their ſouls to beware: and for that purpoſe let this be laid as a foundation, *That that religion, or opinion, cannot be of God, which allows men in any wickedneſs.*

5. But though we muſt not put out this light, which God hath thus put into our ſouls, yet this is not the only way whereby God hath revealed his will; and therefore we are not to reſt here, but proceed to the knowledge of thoſe other things which God hath by other means revealed.

The Light of Scriptures.

6. The way for us to come to know them is by the Scriptures, wherein are ſet down thoſe ſeveral commands of God, which he hath given to be the rule of our duty.

7. Of thoſe, ſome were given before Chriſt came into the world, ſuch are thoſe precepts we find ſcattered throughout the Old Teſtament, but eſpecially contained in the Ten Commandments, and that excellent Book of *Deuteronomy*; others were given by Chriſt, who added much, both to the Law implanted in us by nature, and that of the Old Teſtament; and thoſe you ſhall find in the New Teſtament, in the ſe-

veral precepts given by him and his Apostles, but especially in that divine Sermon on the mount, set down in the 5th, 6th, and 7th Chapters of St. *Matthew's* Gospel.

8. All these should be severally spoke to, but because that would make the Discourse very long, and so less fit for the meaner sort of men, for whose use alone it is intended, I choose to proceed in another manner, by summing up all these together, and so, as plainly as I can, to lay down what is now the Duty of every Christian.

The three great Branches of Mans Duty.

9. This I find briefly contained in the words of the Apostle, *Tit.* 2. 12. *That we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*; where the word, *Soberly*, contains our *Duty* to our *Selves*; *Righteously*, our *Duty* to our *Neighbour*; and *Godly*, our *Duty* to *God*. These therefore shall be the Heads of my Discourse; our DUTY to GOD, our SELVES, and our NEIGHBOUR. I begin with that to *God*, that being the best Ground-work whereon to build both the other.

Duty to God.

10. There are many parts of our DUTY to GOD; the two chief are these: First, to acknowledge him to be God; Secondly, to have no other. Under these are contained all those particulars, which make up our whole Duty to God, which shall be shewed in their order.

Acknowledging him to be God.

11. To acknowledge him to be God, is to believe him to be an infinite glorious Spirit, that was from everlasting, without beginning, and shall be to everlasting, without end; that he is our Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for ever; that he is subject to no alteration, but is unchangeable; that he is no bodily substance, such as our eyes may behold, but spiritual and invisible, *whom no man hath seen, nor can see*, as the Apostle tells us, 1 *Tim.* 6. 16. That he is infinitely great and excellent, beyond all that our wit or conceit can imagine; that he hath received his being from none, and gives being to all things.

12. All this we are to believe of him in regard of his essence and being: But besides this, he is set forth to us in the *Scripture* by several *Excellencies*, as that he is of infinite Goodness and Mercy, Truth, Justice, Wisdom, Power, All-sufficiency, Majesty; that he disposes and governs all things by his Providence; that he knows all things, and is present in all places; these are by Divines called the Attributes of God, and all these we must undoubtingly acknowledge, that is, we must firmly believe all these divine Excellencies to be in God, and that in the greatest degree, and so, that they can never cease to be in him, He can never be other than *infinitely good*, *merciful*, *true*, &c.

13. But the acknowledging him for our God signifies yet more than this; it means that we should perform to him all those several parts of Duty, which belong from a Creature to his God: What those are I am now to tell you.

Faith.

14. The first is FAITH, or Belief, not only that forementioned of his Essence and Attributes, but of his Word, the believing most firmly, that all that he saith is perfectly true. This necessarily arises from that Attribute, his Truth, it being natural for us to believe whatsoever is said of one, of whose truth we are confident. Now the holy Scriptures being the Word of God, we are therefore to conclude, that all that is contained in them is most true.

Of his Affirmations.

15. The things contain'd in them are of these four sorts: First, Affirmations, such are all the stories of the Bible, when it is said, such and such things came so and so to pass; Christ was born of a Virgin, was laid in a Manger, *&c.* And such also are many points of Doctrine, as that there are three Persons in the *Godhead*, that *Christ* is the *Son of God*, and the like. All things of this sort thus delivered in Scripture we are to believe most true. And not only so, but because they are all written for our instruction, we are to consider them for that purpose, that is, by them to lay that foundation of Christian knowledge, on which we may build a Christian life.

Commands.

16. The second sort of things contained in the Scripture, are the *Commands*, that is, the several things enjoined us by God to perform: These we are to believe to come from him, and to be most just and fit for him to command; but then this belief must bring forth obedience, that what we believe thus fit to be done, be indeed done by us; otherwise our belief, that they come from him, serves but to make us more inexcusable.

Threatnings.

17. Thirdly, the Scripture contains Threatnings; many Texts there are, which threaten to them that go on in their sins, the wrath of God; and under that are contained all the punishments and miseries of this life, both spiritual and temporal, and everlasting destruction in the life to come. Now we are most stedfastly to believe, that these are God's Threats, and that they will certainly be performed to every impenitent sinner. But then the use we are to make of this belief, is to keep from those sins to which this destruction is threatned; otherwise our belief adds to our guilt, that will wilfully go on in spight of those Threatnings.

18. Fourthly, The Scripture contains Promises, and those both to our bodies and our souls; for our bodies there are many Promises that God will provide for them what he sees necessary. I will name only one, *Mat.* 6. 33. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things*, that is, all outward necessaries, *shall be added unto you:* But here it is to be observed, that we must *first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, that is, make it our first and greatest care to serve and obey him, before this Promise, even of temporal good things, belong to us. To the soul there are many and high Promises; as first, that of present ease and refreshment, which we find, *Mat.* 11. 29. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls:* But here it is apparent, that before this rest belongs to us, we must have *taken on us Christ's yoke*, become his servants and disciples. Finally, there are Promises to the soul, even of all the benefits of Christ; but yet those only to such as perform the condition required; that is, Pardon of sins to those that repent of them; Increase of grace to those that diligently make use of what they have already, and humbly pray for more; and Eternal Salvation to those that continue to their lives end in hearty obedience to his commands. *Promises.*

19. This Belief of the Promises must therefore stir us up to perform the condition, and till it do so, we can in no reason expect any good by them; and for us to look for the benefit of them on other terms, is the same mad presumption, that it would be in a servant to challenge his master to give him a reward for having done nothing of his work, to which alone the reward was promised: You can easily resolve what answer were to be given to such a servant, and the same we are to expect from God in this case. Nay, further, it is sure, God hath given these Promises to no other end, but to invite us to holiness of life; yea, he gave his Son, in whom all his Promises are, as it were, summ'd up, for this end. We usually look so much at Christ's coming to satisfie for us, that we forget this other part of his errand. But there is nothing surer, than that the main purpose of his coming into the world was to plant good life among men.

20. This is so often repeated in Scripture, that no man, that considers and believes what he reads, can doubt of it. Christ himself tells us, *Mat.* 9. 13. *He came to call sinners to repentance.* And St. *Peter*, *Acts* 3. 26. tells us, *That God sent his Son Jesus to bless us, in turning every one of us from our iniquities*; for, it seems, *The turning us from our iniquities* was the greatest special blessing which God intended us in Christ.

21 Nay, we are taught by St. *Paul*, that this was the end of his very death also, *Tit.* 2. 14. *Who gave himself for our sins, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* And again, *Gal.* 1. 4. *Who gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world*, that is, from the sins and ill customs of the world. Divers other Texts there are to this purpose; but these I suppose sufficient to assure any man of this one great truth, That all that Christ hath done for us was directed to this end, the bringing us to live Christianly; or in the words of St. *Paul*, *To teach us that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.*

22. Now we know Christ is the foundation of all the Promises; *In him all the promises of God are Yea and Amen*, 2 Cor. 1. 20. And therefore, if God gave Christ to this end, certainly the Promises are to the same also. And then how great an abuse of them is it to make them serve for purposes quite contrary to what they were intended? *viz.* to the encouraging us in sins, which they will certainly do, if we perswade our selves they belong to us, how wickedly soever we live. The Apostle teaches us another use of them, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. *Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* When we do thus, we may justly apply the Promises to ourselves, and with comfort expect our parts in them. But till then, though these Promises be of certain truth, yet we can reap no benefit from them, because we are not the persons to whom they are made, that is, we perform not the condition required to give us right to them.

23. This is the Faith or belief required of us towards the things God hath revealed to us in the Scripture, to wit, such as may answer the end for which they were so revealed, that is, the bringing us to good lives; the bare believing the truth of them, without this, is no more than the Devils do, as St. *James* tells us, *Chap.* 2. 19. only they are not so unreasonable as some of us are, for they will tremble, as knowing well this Faith will never do them any good. But many of us go on confidently, and doubt not the sufficiency of our Faith, tho' we have not the least fruit of obedience to approve it by; let such hear St. *James*'s judgment in the point, *Chap.* 2. 26. *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith if it have not works is dead also.*

Hope. 24. A second Duty to God is HOPE; that is, a comfortable expectation of these good things he hath promised. But this, as I told you before of Faith, must be such as agrees to the nature of the Promises, which being such as requires a condition on our part, we can hope no farther than we make that good; or if we do, we are so far from performing by it this duty of Hope, that we commit the great sin of Presumption, which is nothing else, but hoping where God hath given us no ground to hope; this every man doth, that hopes for pardon of sins and eternal life, without that repentance and obedience to which alone they are promised: The true Hope is that which purifies us, St. *John* saith, 1 *Ep.* 3. 3. *Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure*; that is, it makes him leave his sins, and earnestly endeavour to be holy as Christ is; and that which doth not so, how confident soever it be, may well be concluded to be but that Hope of the hypocrite, which *Job* assures us shall perish.

Presumption.

Despair. 25. But there is another way of transgressing this Duty, besides that of Presumption, and that is by Desperation, by which I mean not that which is ordinarily so called, *viz.* the despairing of mercy so long as we continue in our sins, for that is but just for us to do; but I mean such a Desperation, as makes us give over endeavour, that is, when a man, that sees he is not at the present such a one as the Promises belong to, concludes, he can never become such, and therefore neglects all duty, and goes on in his sins. This is indeed the sinful Desperation, and that, which if it be continued in, must end in destruction.

26 Now the work of Hope is to prevent this, by setting before us the generality of the Promises, that they belong to all that will but perform the condition. And therefore, though a man have not hitherto performed it, and so hath yet no right to them, yet Hope will tell him, that that right may yet be gained, if he will now set heartily about it. It is therefore strange folly for any man, be he never so sinful, to give up himself for lost, when if he will but change his course, he shall be as certain to partake of the Promises of mercy, as if he had never gone on in those former sins.

27. This Christ shews us in the parable of the Prodigal, *Luke* 15. where we see that son, which had run away from his father, and had consumed the portion given him, in riotous living, was yet upon his return and repentance used with as much kindness by the father, as he that had never offended, nay, with higher and more passionate expressions of love. The intent of which Parable was only to shew us, how graciously our heavenly Father will receive us, how great soever our former sins have been, if we shall return to him with true sorrow for what is past, and sincere obedience for the time to come; nay, so acceptable a thing is it to God, to have any sinner return from the error of his ways, that there is a kind of triumph in Heaven for it, *There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*, Luke 15. 10. And now who would not rather choose, by a timely repentance, to bring joy to Heaven, to God and his holy Angels, than by a sullen Desperation to please Satan and his accursed spirits; especially when by the former we shall gain endless happiness to ourselves, and by the latter as endless torments?

Love, its Motives. 28. A third Duty to God is LOVE: There are two common Motives of Love among men; the one, the goodness and excellency of the person, the other, his particular kindness and love to us; and both these are in the highest degree in God.

God's Excellency. 29. First, He is of infinite Goodness and Excellency in himself; this you were before taught to believe of him, and no man can doubt it, that considers but this one thing, that there is nothing good in the world but what hath received all its goodness from God; his goodness is as the sea, or ocean, and the goodness of all creatures but as some small streams flowing from the sea. Now you would certainly think him a mad man, that should say, the sea were not greater than some little brook: And certainly it is no less folly to suppose that the goodness of God doth not as much (nay infinitely more) exceed that of all creatures. Besides, the goodness of the creature is imperfect, and mixt with much evil, but his is pure and entire without any such mixture. He is perfectly holy, and cannot be tainted with the least impurity, neither can be the author of any to us, for though he be the cause of all the goodness in us, he is the cause of none of our sins. This St. *James* expresly tells us, Chap 1. 13. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*

His Kindness to us. 30. But secondly, God is not only thus good in himself, but he is also wonderful good, that is, kind and merciful to us. We are made up of two parts, a Soul and a Body, and to each of these God hath expressed infinite mercy and tenderness. Do but consider what was before told you of the SECOND COVENANT, and the mercies therein offered, even Christ himself, and all his benefits, and also that he offers

them so sincerely and heartily, that no man can miss of enjoying them, but by his own default. For he doth most really and affectionately desire we should embrace them and live, as appears by that solemn Oath of his, *Ezek.* 33. 11. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;* whereto he adds this passionate expression, *Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?* To the same purpose you may read, *Ezek.* 18. Consider this, I say, and then surely you cannot but say, he hath great kindness to our souls. Nay, let every man but remember with himself the many calls he hath had to repentance and amendment, sometimes outward by the word, sometimes inward by the secret whispers of God's Spirit in his heart, which were only to woo and intreat him to avoid eternal misery, and to accept of eternal happiness; let him, I say, remember these, together with those many other means God hath used toward him for the same end, and he will have reason to confess God's Kindness, not only to mens souls in general, but to his own in particular.

31. Neither hath he been wanting to our bodies; all the good things they enjoy, as health, strength, food, raiment, and whatever else concerns them, are meerly his gifts: So that indeed it is impossible we should be ignorant of his mercies to them; all those outward comforts and refreshments we daily enjoy, being continual effects and witnesses of it; and tho' some enjoy more of these than others, yet there is no person but enjoys so much in one kind or other, as abundantly shews Gods mercy and kindness to him in respect of his body.

32. And now surely you will think it but reasonable we should love him, who is in all respects thus lovely: Indeed this is a duty so generally acknowledged, that if you should ask any man the question, whether he loved God or no, he would think you did him great wrong to doubt of it. Yet for all this, it is too plain, that there are very few that do indeed love him; and this will soon be proved to you by examining a little what are the common effects of love, which we bear to men like our selves, and then trying whether we can shew any such fruits of our love to God.

33. Of that sort there are divers, but for shortness I will name but two. The first is a desire of pleasing; the second, a desire of enjoying. These are constantly the fruits of Love. For the first, 'tis known by all, that he that loves any person, is very desirous to approve himself to him, to do whatsoever he thinks will be pleasing to him; and, according to the degree of Love, so is this desire more or less; where we love earnestly, we are very earnest and careful to please. Now, if we have indeed that Love to God we pretend to, it will bring forth this fruit, we shall be careful to please him in all things. Therefore, as you judge of the *tree by its fruits*, so may you judge of your Love of God, by this fruit of it; nay, indeed this is the way of trial, which Christ himself hath given us, *Joh.* 14. 15. *If ye love me, keep my commandments;* and St. *John* tells us, 1 *Ep.* 5. 3. *That this is the love of God, that we walk after his commandments;* and where this one proof is wanting, it will be impossible to testifie our Love to God.

Fruit of Love, desire of pleasing.

34. But it must yet be farther consider'd, that this Love of God must not be in a low or weak degree; for besides that the motives to it, his excellency and his kindness are in the highest; the same commandment, which bids us love God, bids us *love him with all our hearts, and with all our strength*, that is, as much as is possible for us, and above any thing else: And therefore, to the fulfilling this commandment, it is necessary we love him in that degree; and if we do so, then certainly we shall have not only some slight and faint endeavours of pleasing, but such as are most diligent and earnest, such as will put us upon the most painful and costly duties, make us willing to forsake our own ease, goods, friends, yea, life it self, when we cannot keep them without disobeying God.

35. Now examine thy self by this; Hast thou this fruit of Love to shew? Dost thou make it thy constant and greatest care to keep God's commandments? to obey him in all things? earnestly labouring to please him to the utmost of thy power, even to the forsaking of what is dearest to thee in this world? If thou dost, thou mayest then truly say, thou lovest God. But on the contrary, if thou wilfully continuest in the breach of many, nay, but of any one command of his, never deceive thy self, for the Love of God abides not in thee. This will be made plain to you, if you consider what the Scripture saith of such, as that they *are enemies to God by their wicked works*, Col. 1. 21. That the carnal mind (and such is every one that continues *wilfully in sin*) is *enmity with God*, Rom. 8. 7. That he that *sins wilfully, tramples under foot the Son of God, and doth despite unto the Spirit of Grace*, Heb. 10. 29. and many the like. And therefore, unless you can think enmity, and trampling, and despite to be fruits of

of Love, you must not believe you love God, whilst you go on in any wilful disobedience to him.

Desire of enjoying.

36. A second fruit of Love, I told you, was desire of enjoying. This is constantly to be seen in our Love to one another. If you have a friend, whom you intirely love, you desire his conversation, wish to be always in his company: And thus will it be also in our Love to God, if that be as great and hearty as this.

37. There is a twofold enjoying of God, the one imperfect in this life, the other more perfect and compleat in the life to come: That in this life is that conversation, as I may call it, which we have with God in his Ordinances, in praying and meditating, in hearing his Word, in receiving the Sacrament, which are all intended for this purpose, to bring us into an intimacy and familiarity with God, by speaking to him, and hearing him speak to us.

38. Now if we do indeed love God, we shall certainly hugely value and desire these ways of conversing with him; it being all that we can have in this life, it will make us with *David*, esteem *one day in God's courts better than a thousand*, Psal. 84. 10. We shall be glad to have these opportunities of approaching to him as often as it is possible, and be careful to use them diligently, to that end of uniting us still more to him; yea, we shall come to these spiritual exercises with the same cheerfulness we would go to our dearest friend. And if indeed we do thus, it is a good proof of our Love.

39. But I fear there are not many have this to shew for it, as appears by the common backwardness and unwillingness of men to come to these; and their negligence and heartlesness when they are at them; and can we think that God will ever own us for Lovers of him, whilst we have such dislike to his company, that we will never come into it, but when we are dragg'd by fear or shame of men, or some such worldly motive? It is sure you would not think that man loved you, whom you perceive to shun your company, and be loth to come into your sight. And therefore be not so unreasonable as to say, you love God, when yet you desire to keep as far from him as you can.

40. But besides this, there is another enjoyment of God, which is more perfect and compleat, and that is our perpetual enjoying of him in heaven, where we shall be for ever united to him, and enjoy him not now and then only for short spaces of time, as we do here, but continually without interruption or breaking off. And certainly, if we have that degree of Love to God we ought, this cannot but be most earnestly desired by us, so much that we shall think no labour too great to compass it. The seven years that *Jacob* serv'd for *Rachel*, Gen. 29. 20. *seemed to him but a few days for the love that he had to her:* And surely, if we have Love to God, we shall not think the service of our whole lives too dear a price for this full enjoyment of him, nor esteem all the enjoyments of the world worth the looking on in comparison thereof.

41. If we can truly tell our selves we do thus long for this enjoyment of God, we may believe we love him. But I fear again there are but few that can thus approve their Love. For if we look into mens lives, we shall see they are not generally so fond of this enjoyment, as to be at any pains to purchase it. And not only so, but it is to be doubted there are many, who, if it were put to their choice, whether they would live here always, to enjoy the profit and pleasure of the world, or go to heaven to enjoy God, would, like the children of *Gad* and *Reuben*, set up their rest on this side *Jordan*, *Numb.* 32. and never desire that heavenly *Canaan;* so close do their affections cleave to things below; which shews clearly they have not made God their treasure; for then, according to our Saviours rule, *Mat.* 6. 21. their heart would be with him. Nay, further yet, it is too plain, that many of us set so little value on this enjoying of God, that we prefer the vilest and basest sins before him, and choose to enjoy them, though by it we utterly lose our parts in him, which is the case of every man that continues wilfully in those sins.

42. And now, I fear, according to these rules of trial, many that profess to love God, will be found not to do so. I conclude all with the words of St. *John*, 1 *Ep*. 3. 18. which, though spoken of the Love of our brethren, is very fitly appliable to this Love of God; *Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

43. A fourth Duty to God is FEAR: This arises from the consideration both of his justice and his power: His justice is such, that he will not clear the wicked, and his power such, that he is able to inflict the sorest punishments upon them; and that this is a reasonable cause of Fear, Christ himself tells us, *Mat.* 10. 28. *Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.* Many other places of Scripture there are, which commend to us this duty, as *Ps.* 2. 11. *Serve the Lord with fear.* Ps. 34. 9. *Fear the Lord, ye that be his Saints.* Prov. 9. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;*

and divers the like; and indeed all the threatnings of wrath against sinners, which we meet with in the Scripture, are only to this end, to work this Fear in our hearts.

44. Now this Fear is nothing else but such an awful regard of God, as may keep us from offending him. This the wise man tells us, *Prov.* 16. 17. *The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil*, so that none can be said truly to fear God, that is not thereby withheld from sin; and this is but answerable to that common fear we have towards men; whoever we know may hurt us, we will beware of provoking; and therefore if we be not as wary of displeasing God, it is plain we fear men more than we do him.

The Folly of fearing Men, more than God.

45. How great a madness this is, thus to fear men above God, will soon appear, if we compare what man can do to us, with that which God can. And first, it is sure, it is not in the power of man (I might say devils too) to do us any hurt, unless God permit and suffer them to do it; so that if we do but keep him our friend, we may say with the Psalmist, *The Lord is on my side, I fear not what man can do unto me.* For let their malice be never so great, he can restrain and keep them from hurting us; nay, he can change their minds towards us, according to that of the wise man, *Prov.* 16. 7. *When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.* A notable example of this we have in *Jacob*, *Gen.* 32. who, when his brother *Esau* was coming against him as an enemy, God wonderfully turn'd his heart, so that he met him with all the expressions of brotherly kindness, as you may read in the next Chapter.

46. But secondly, Suppose men were left at liberty to do thee what mischief they could; alas, their power goes but a little way; they may perhaps rob thee of thy goods, it may be they may take away thy liberty, or thy credit, or perchance thy life too, but that, thou knowest, is the utmost they can do. But now God can do all this when he pleases, and that which is infinitely more, his vengeance reaches even beyond death it self, to the eternal misery both of body and soul in hell; in comparison of which, death is so inconsiderable, that we are not to look upon it with any dread: *Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do*, saith Christ, *Luke* 12. 4. and then immediately adds, *But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear, fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell, yea, I say unto you, fear him.* In which words the comparison is set between the greatest ill we can suffer from man, the loss of life, and those sadder evils God can inflict on us; and the latter are found to be the only dreadful things, and therefore God only to be feared.

47. But there is yet one thing further considerable in this matter, which is this, It is possible we may transgress against men, and they not know it: I may perhaps steal my Neighbour's goods, or defile his wife, and keep it so close, that he shall not suspect me; and so never bring me to punishment for it: But this we cannot do with God; he knows all things, even the most secret thoughts of our hearts; and therefore, tho' we commit a sin never so closely, he is sure to find us, and will as surely, if we do not timely repent, punish us eternally for it.

48. And now surely it cannot but be confest, that it is much safer displeasing men than God; yet alas, our practice is, as if we believed the direct contrary, there being nothing more ordinary with us, than, for the avoiding of some present danger we fear from men, to rush our selves upon the indignation of God. And thus it is with us, when either, to save our estates or credits, or our very lives, we commit any sin; for that is plainly the choosing to provoke God rather than man.

49. But, God knows, this case of fear of men, is not the only one wherein we venture to displease him; for we commit many sins, to which we have none of this temption, nor indeed any other; as for instance, that of common swearing, to which there is nothing either of pleasure, or profit to invite us. Nay, many times we, who so fear the mischiefs that other men may do to us, that we are ready to buy them off with the greatest sins, do our selves bring all those very mischiefs upon us, by sins of our own choosing. Thus the careless prodigal robs himself of his estate; the deceitful and dishonest man, or any that lives in open notorious sin, deprives himself of his credit, and the drunkard and glutton brings diseases on him self, to the shortning his life. And can we think we do at all fear God, when that fear hath so little power over us, that though it be backt with the many present mischiefs that attend upon sin, it is not able to keep us from them? Surely such men are so far from fearing God, that they rather seem to defie him, resolve to provoke him, whatsoever it cost them, either in this world or the next. Yet so unreasonably partial we are to our selves, that even such as these will pretend to this Fear: You may examine multitudes of the most gross scandalous sinners, before you shall meet with one that will acknowledge he fears not God. It is strange it should be possible for men thus to cheat themselves; but however it is certain we cannot deceive God, he will not be mockt, and therefore, if we

will

will not now so fear, as to avoid sin, we shall one day fear, when it will be too late to avoid punishment.

Trust. 50. A fifth Duty to God is that of TRUSTING in him, that is, depending and resting on him; and that is, first, in all dangers, secondly, in all wants. We are to rest on him in all our dangers, both spiritual and temporal. Of the first sort, are all those temptations, by which we are in danger to be drawn to sin. And in this respect he has promised, that if we *resist the devil, he shall flee from us*, James 4. 7. Therefore our duty is, first, to pray earnestly for Gods Grace to enable us to overcome the temptation; and secondly, to set ourselves manfully to combat with it, not yielding or giving consent to it in the least degree; and whilst we do thus, we are confidently to rest upon God, that his Grace will be sufficient for us, that he will either remove the temptation, or strengthen us to withstand it.

In all spiritual dangers.

In all temporal. 51. Secondly, in all outward and temporal dangers we are to rest upon him, as knowing that he is able to deliver us, and that he will do so, if he sees it best for us, and if we be such to whom he hath promised his protection; that is, such as truly fear him. To this purpose we have many promises in Scripture, *Ps.* 34. 7. *The Angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them:* And *Ps.* 34. 22. *The Lord delivereth the souls of his Saints, and all that put their trust in him shall not be destitute;* and divers the like. Also we have many examples, as that of the three Children in the furnace, *Dan.* 3. That of *Daniel* in the Lions den, *Dan.* 6. and many others: All which serve to teach us this one lesson, That if we go on conscionably in performing our duty, we need not be dismayed for any thing that can befal us; for the God whom we serve, is able to deliver us.

Not seek to deliver our selves by any sin. 52. Therefore in all dangers we are first humbly to pray for his aid, and then to rest our selves cheerfully on him, and assuring our selves that he will give such an issue, as shall be most for our good. But above all things, we must be sure to fix our dependance wholly on him, and not to rely on the creatures for help; much less must we seek to deliver our selves by any unlawful means, that is, by the committing of any sin; for that is like *Saul*, 1 *Sam* .28. 7. *to go to the witch*, that is, to the *Devil*, for help: Such courses do commonly deceive our hopes at the present, and instead of delivering us out of our straits, plunge us in greater, and those much more uncomfortable ones, because then we want that which is the only support, God's favour and aid, which we certainly forfeit, when we thus seek to rescue our selves by any sinful means. But supposing we could by such a way certainly free our selves from the present danger; yet alas, we are far from having gained safety by it: We have only removed the danger from that which was less considerable, and brought it upon the most precious part of us, our souls, like an unskilful Physician, that to remove a pain from the finger, strikes it to the heart. We are therefore grosly mistaken, when we think we have played the good husband in saving our liberties or estates, or lives themselves by a sin; we have not saved them, but madly overbought them, laid out our very souls on them: And Christ tells us how little we shall gain by such bargains, *Matt.* 16. 26. *What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Let us therefore resolve never to value any thing we can possess in this world at so high a rate, as to keep it at the price of the least sin; but whenever things are driven to such an issue, that we must either part with some, perhaps all our worldly possessions, nay, life it self, or else commit a sin, let us then remember, that this is the season for us to perform that great and excellent duty of *taking up the cross*, which we can never so properly do as in this case; for our bearing of that, which we have no possible way of avoiding, can at most be said to be but the carrying of the Cross; but then only can we be said to take it up, when having a means of escaping it by a sin, we rather choose to endure the Cross, than commit the sin; for then it is not laid on us by any unavoidable necessity, but we willingly choose it, and this is highly acceptable with God, yea, withal so strictly required by him, that, if we fail of performing it, when we are put to the trial, we are not to be accounted followers of Christ, for so himself hath expresly told us, *Matt.* 16. 24. *If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me:* And so again, *Mark* 8. 34. It were therefore a good point of spiritual wisdom, for us, sometimes by some lower degrees of self-denial, to fit our selves for this greater, when we shall be called to it. We know he that expects to run a race, will before hand be often breathing himself, that he may not be foiled when he comes to run for the prize: In like manner 'twill be fit for us sometimes to abridge our selves somewhat of our lawful pleasure, or ease, or profit, so that we may get such a mastery over our selves, as to be able to renounce all, when our obedience to God requires it.

53. And

In all Wants Spiritual.

53. And as we are thus to trust on God for deliverance from dangers, so we are likewise for supply of our Wants; and those again are either spiritual or temporal: Our spiritual Want is that of his Grace, to enable us to serve him, without which we can do nothing; and for this we are to depend on him, provided we neglect not the means, which are prayer, and a careful using of what he hath already bestowed on us: For then we have his promise for it, *He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it*, Luke 11.13. and *unto him that hath shall be given*, Matth. 25. 29. that is, *To him that hath made a good use of that grace he hath already, God will give more.* We are not therefore to affright our selves with the difficulty of those things God requires of us, but remember he commands nothing, which he will not enable us to perform, if we be not wanting to our selves. And therefore let us sincerely do our parts, and confidently assure our selves God will not fail of his.

Temporal Wants.

54. But we have likewise temporal and bodily Wants; and for the supply of them we are likewise to rely on him. And for this also we want no promises, supposing us to be of the number of them, to whom they are made, that is, God's faithful servants: *They that fear the Lord lack nothing*, Ps. 34. 9. and ver. 10. *They that seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good:* Again, Psal. 33. 18, 19. *Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy, to deliver their souls from death, and to feed them in time of famine.* Examples also we have of this, as we may see in the case of *Elijah* and the *poor widow*, 1 Kings 17. and many others.

55. We are therefore to look up to him for the provision of all things necessary for us, according to that of the Psalmist, *The eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord, and thou givest them their meat in due season.* And our Saviour hath taught us to pray for our *daily bread*, thereby teaching us, that we are to live in continual dependance upon God for it. Yet I mean not by this, that we should so expect it from God, as to give up our selves to idleness, and expect to be fed by miracles. No, our honest industry and labour is the means by which God ordinarily gives us the necessaries of this life; and therefore we must by no means neglect that; *He that will not labour, let him not eat*, says the Apostle, 2 *Thess.* 3. 10. And we may believe God will pronounce the same sentence, and suffer the slothful person to want even necessary food. But when we have faithfully used our own endeavour, then we must also look up to God for his blessing on it, without which it can never prosper to us. And having done thus, we may comfortably rest our selves on his providence for such a measure of these outward things, as he sees fittest for us.

56. But if our condition be such, that we are not able to labour, and have no other means of bringing in the necessaries of life to our selves, yet even then we are cheerfully to rest upon God, believing that he, who feeds the *Ravens*, will, by some means or other, though we know not what, provide for us, so long as he pleases we shall continue in this world, and never in any case torment our selves with carking and distrustful thoughts, but as the Apostle, 1 *Pet.* 5. 7. *Cast all our care upon him who careth for us.*

57. This is earnestly prest by our Saviour, *Mat.* 6. where he abundantly shews the folly of this sin of distrust. The place is a most excellent one, and therefore I shall set it down at large, *Verse* 25. *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; neither for your body, what ye shall put on: Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even* Solomon *in all his glory was not arayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and then all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for to morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of it self: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* I might add many other texts to this purpose, but this is so full and convincing, that I suppose it needless.

The Benefits of trusting on God.

58. All therefore that I shall say more concerning this duty, is to put you in mind of the great benefits of it; as first, that by this Trusting upon God, you engage and bind him to provide for you. Men, you know, think themselves highly concern'd not to

fail those that depend and trust upon them; and certainly God doth so much more. But then, secondly, There is a great deal of ease and quiet in the practice of this duty; it delivers us from all those carkings and immoderate cares, which disquiet our minds, break our sleep, and gnaw even our very heart. I doubt not but those that have felt them, need not be told they are uneasy: But then, methinks, that uneasiness should make us forward to embrace the means for the removing of them, and so we see it too often doth in unlawful ones; men will cheat, and steal, and lie, and do any thing to deliver themselves from the fear of want; but alas! they commonly prove but deceitful remedies; they bring God's curse on us, and so are more likely to betray us to want, than to keep us from it. But if you desire a certain and unfailing cure for cares, take this of relying upon God.

59. For what should cause that man to fear want, that knows he has one that cares for him, who is All-sufficient, and will not suffer him to want what is fit for him? If a poor man had but a faithful promise from a wealthy person, that he would never suffer him to want, it is sure he would be highly cheer'd with it, and would not then think fit to be as carking as he was before: And yet a man's promise may fail us; he may either grow poor, and not be able, or he may prove false, and not be willing, to make good his word. But we know God is subject neither to impoverishing nor deceit. And therefore how vile an injury do we offer to him, if we dare not trust as much upon his promise, as we would that of a man? Yea, and how great a mischief do we do our selves by loading our minds with a multitude of vexatious and tormenting cares, when we may so securely *cast our burden upon God?* I conclude this in the words of the Apostle, *Phil.* 4. 6. *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*

SUNDAY II.

Of Humility; Of Submission to God's Will, in respect of Obedience; Of Patience in all sorts of Sufferings, and of Honour due to God in several Ways, in his House, Possessions, his Day, Word, Sacraments, &c.

Humility.

Sect. 1. A SIXTH Duty to God is HUMILITY; that is, such a sense of our own meanness and his excellency, as may work in us lowly and unfeigned Submission to him: This Submission is twofold, first, to his Will, secondly, to his Wisdom.

Submission to God's Will in respect of Obedience.

2. The Submission to his Will is also of two sorts, the Submission either of Obedience or Patience; that of Obedience is our ready yielding our selves up to do his Will, so that when God hath, by his command, made known to us what his pleasure is, cheerfully and readily to set about it. To enable us to this, Humility is exceeding necessary; for a proud person is, of all others, the unaptest to obey; and we see men never pay an obedience, but where they acknowledge the person commanding to be some way above them, and so it is here. If we be not throughly persuaded that God is infinitely above us, that we are vileness and nothing in comparison of him, we shall never pay our due Obedience.

The great distance between God and us.

3. Therefore, if ever you mean to obey intirely (as you must, if ever you mean to be saved) get your hearts possest with the sense of that great unspeakable distance that is between God and you: Consider him, as he is, a God of infinite Majesty and Glory, and we poor worms of the earth: He infinite in power, able to do all things, and we able to do nothing, not so much as to make one *hair white or black,* as our Saviour speaks, *Matt.* 5. 36. He of infinite purity and holiness, and we polluted and defiled, wallowing in all kind of sins and uncleanness: He unchangeable and constant, and we subject to change and alteration every minute of our lives: He eternal and immortal, and we frail mortals, that whenever he taketh *away our breath, we die, and are turned again to our dust,* Psal. 104. 29. Consider all this, I say, and you cannot but acknowledge a wide difference between God and man, and therefore may well cry out with *Job,* after he had approached so near to God, as to discern somewhat of his excellency, *Job* 42. 5, 6. *Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes.*

4. And even when this Humility hath brought us to Obedience, it is not then to be cast off, as if we had no further use of it; for there is still great use, nay, necessity of it, to keep us from any high conceits of our performances, which if we once entertain, it will blast the best of them, and make them utterly unacceptable to God; like the strictness of the *Pharisee*, which, when once he came to boast of, the *Publican* was preferr'd before him, *Luke* 18. The best of our works are so full of infirmity and pollution, that if we compare them with that perfection and purity, which is in God, we may truly say with the Prophet, *All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*, Isa. *64. 6.* And therefore to pride our selves in them is the same madness that it would be in a Beggar to brag of his apparel, when it is nothing but vile rags and tatters. Our Saviour's precept in this matter must always be remembred, *Luke* 17. 10. *When you have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants:* If, when we have done all, we must give our selves no better a title, what are we then to esteem our selves, that are so far from doing any considerable Part of what we are commanded? Surely, that worser name of *slothful* and *wicked servant*, Matth. 25. 26. we have no reason to think too bad for us. *The unworthiness of our best Works.*

5. A second sort of Submission to his Will, is that of Patience: This stands in suffering his Will, as that of Obedience did in acting it, and is nothing else, but a willing and quiet yielding to whatever afflictions it pleases God to lay upon us. This the forementioned Humility will make easy to us; for when our hearts are throughly possessed with that reverence and esteem of God, it will be impossible for us to grudge or murmur at whatever he does. We see an instance of this in old *Eli*, 1 *Sam. 3.* who after he had heard the sad threatnings of God against him, of the destruction of his family, the loss of the priesthood, the cutting off both his sons in one day, which were all of them afflictions of the heaviest kind, yet this one consideration, that it was the Lord, enabled him calmly and quietly to yield to them, saying, *Let him do what seemeth him good*, Ver. 18. The same effect it had on *David* in his sufferings, *Psal. 39. 9. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.* God's doing it silenced all murmurings and grumblings in him; and so must it do in us in all our afflictions, if we will indeed approve our Humility to God. *Submission in respect of Patience.*

6. For surely you would not think that child hath due humility to his parent, or that servant to his master, that, when they are corrected, shall fly in the father's or master's face. But this do we, whenever we grudge and repine at that which God lays upon us. But besides the want of humility in our so doing, there is also a great want of justice in it; for God hath, as we are his creatures, a right to do with us what he will; and therefore for us to resist that right of his, is the highest injustice that can be; nay, further, it is also the greatest folly in the world, for it is only our good that God aims at in afflicting us: That heavenly Father is not like our earthly ones, who sometimes correct their children only to satisfie their own angry humour, not to do them good. But this is subject to no such frailties; *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*, Lament. 3. 33. They are our sins, which do not only give him just cause, but even force and necessitate him to punish us: He carries to us the bowels and affections of the tenderest father. Now, when a father sees his child stubborn and rebellious, and running on in a course that will certainly undo him, what greater act of fatherly kindness can he do, than chasten and correct him, to see, if by that means he may amend him? nay, indeed, he could not be said to have true kindness to him if he should not. And thus it is with God; when he sees us run on in sin; either he must leave off to love us, and so leave us to our selves to take our own course, and that is the heaviest curse that can befal any man; or else, if he continue to love us, he must correct and punish us to bring us to amendment. Therefore, whenever he strikes, we are, in all reason, not only patiently to lie under his rod, but (as I may say) kiss it also; that is, be very thankful to him, that he is pleased not to *give us over to our own hearts lusts*, Psal. 18. 12. but still continues his care of us, sends afflictions, as so many messengers, to call us home to himself. You see then how gross a folly it is to murmur at those stripes, which are meant so graciously; it is like that of a froward patient, which reproaches and reviles the physician that comes to cure him; and if such a one be left to die of his disease, every one knows whom he is to thank for it. *Thankfulness for God's corrections.*

7. But it is not only quietness, no, nor thankfulness neither under afflictions, that is the full of our duty in this matter: We must have Fruitfulness also, or all the rest will stand us in no stead. By Fruitfulness, I mean, the bringing forth that, which the afflictions were sent to work in us, *viz.* the amendment of our lives. To which purpose in time of affliction it is very necessary for us to call our selves to an account, to examine our hearts and lives, and search diligently what sins lie upon us, which have *Fruitfulness under them.*

 provoked

provoked God thus to smite us; and whatsoever we find our selves guilty of, humbly to confess to God, and immediately to forsake for the rest of our time.

In all sorts of sufferings. 8. All I shall add concerning this duty of Patience is, that we are as much bound to it in one sort of sufferings, as another, whether our sufferings be so immediately from God's hand, that no creature hath any thing to do in it, as sickness, or the like; or whether it be such wherein men are the instruments of afflicting us. For it is most sure, when any man doth us hurt, he could not do it without God's permission and sufferance; and God may as well make them the instruments of punishing us, as do it more directly by him self: And it is but a counterfeit Patience, that pretends to submit to God, and yet can bear nothing from men. We see holy *Job*, who is set forth to us as a pattern of true Patience, made no such difference in his afflictions; he took the loss of his cattle, which the *Chaldeans* and *Sabeans* robbed him of, with the very same meekness with which he did that which was consumed by fire from heaven. When therefore we suffer any thing from men, be it never so unjustly in respect of them, we are yet to confess it is most just in respect of God; and therefore, instead of looking upon them with rage and revenge, as the common custom of the world is, we are to look up to God, acknowledge his justice in the affliction, begging his pardon most earnestly for those sins which have provoked him to send it, and patiently and thankfully bear it, till he shall see fit to remove it; still saying with *Job*, *Blessed be the name of the Lord*.

Submission to God's Wisdom. 9. But I told you, Humility contained in it a Submission not only to his will, but also to his wisdom; that is, to acknowledge him infinitely wise, and therefore, that whatever he doth, is best and fittest to be done. And this we are to confess both in his commands, and in his disposing and ordering of things. First, whatsoever he commands us, either to believe or do, we are to submit to his wisdom in both; to believe whatsoever he bids us to believe, how impossible soever it seems to our shallow understandings; and to do whatever he commands us to do, how contrary soever it be to our fleshly reason or humour; and in both to conclude, that his commands are most fit and reasonable, however they appear to us.

In his Commands.

In his Disposals. 10. Secondly, we are to submit to his wisdom in respect of his Disposal and ordering of things; to acknowledge he disposes all things most wisely; and that not only in what concerns the world in general, but also in what concerns every one of us in particular: So that, in what condition soever he puts us, we are to assure our selves it is that which is best for us, since he chooses it for us, who cannot err; and therefore never to have impatient desires of any thing in this world, but to leave it to God to fit us with such an estate and condition as he sees best for us, and there let us quietly and contentedly rest; yea, though it be such, as of all others we should least have wish'd for our selves. And this surely cannot but appear very reasonable to any that hath Humility; for that having taught him that God is infinitely wise, and he very foolish, he can never doubt but that it is much more for his good, that God should choose for him, than he for him self; even as it is much more for the child's good to have the parent choose for it, than to be left to those silly choices it would make for it self: For how many times would it cut, and burn, and mischief it self, if it might have every thing it desires? And such children are we; we many times eagerly desire those things which would undo us if we had them. Thus many times we wish for wealth, and honour, and beauty, and the like; when, if we had them, they would only prove snares to us; we should be drawn into sin by them: And this God, who knows all things, sees, though we do not; and therefore often denies us those things, which he sees will tend to our mischief; and it is his abundant mercy that he doth so. Let us therefore, whenever we are disappointed of any of our aims and wishes, not only patiently, but joyfully submit to it, as knowing that it is certainly best for us, it being chosen by the unerring wisdom of our heavenly Father.

Honour. 11. A seventh duty to God is HONOUR, that is, the paying him such a reverence and respect as belongs to so great a majesty: And this is either inward or outward: The inward is the exalting him in our hearts, having always the highest and most excellent esteem of him: The outward is the manifesting and shewing forth that inward; and that is the first general in the whole course of our lives, the living like men, that do indeed carry that high esteem of God. Now, you know, if we bear any special reverence but to a man, we will be careful not to do any foul or base thing in his presence; and so, if we do indeed honour God, we shall abhor to do any unworthy thing in his sight. But God sees all things, and therefore there is no way to shun the doing it in his sight, if we do it at all; therefore, if we do thus reverence him, we must never at any time do any sinful thing.

12. But beſides this general way of Honouring God, there are many particular acts, by which we may honour him; and theſe acts are divers, according to the ſeveral particulars about which they are exerciſed: For we are to pay this honour not only immediately to him ſelf, but alſo by a due eſtimation and account of all thoſe things that nearly relate or belong to him. Thoſe are eſpecially ſix; firſt, his Houſe; ſecondly, his Revenue or Income, (as I may ſay;) thirdly, his Day; fourthly, his Word; fifthly, his Sacraments; and ſixthly, his Name. And every one of theſe is to have ſome degree of our reverence and eſteem.

Several ways of honouring God.

13. Firſt, his Houſe, that is, the Church; which being the place ſet apart for his publick Worſhip, we are to look on it, though not as holy in reſpect of it ſelf, yet in reſpect of its uſe, and therefore muſt not profane it by employing it to uſes of our own. This Chriſt hath taught us by that act of his, *Matt.* 21. 12. in driving the buyers and ſellers out of the Temple, ſaying, *My houſe is called the houſe of Prayer*: And again, *John* 2. 16. *Make not my Fathers houſe a houſe of merchandiſe.* By which it is clear, Churches are to be uſed only for the ſervices of God; and we are to make that the only end of our coming thither, and not to come to Church as to a market, to make bargains, or diſpatch buſineſſes with our neighbours, as is too common among many. But whenever thou entreſt the Church, remember that it is the Houſe of God, a place where he is in an eſpecial manner preſent; and therefore take the counſel of the wiſe man, *Eccleſ.* 5. 1. *and keep thy foot when thou goeſt into the Houſe of God*; that is, behave thy ſelf with that godly awe and reverence, which belongs to that great Majeſty thou art before. Remember that thy buſineſs there is to converſe with God; and therefore ſhut out all thoughts of the world, even of thy moſt lawful buſineſs, which, though they be allowable at another time, are here ſinful. How fearful a guilt is it then to entertain any ſuch thoughts as are in themſelves wicked? It is like the treaſon of *Judas*, who pretended indeed to come to kiſs his Maſter, but brought with him a band of ſoldiers to apprehend him, *Matt.* 26. We make ſhew in our coming to Church of ſerving and worſhipping God; but we bring with us a train of his enemies to provoke and deſpite him. This is a wickedneſs, that may outvie the profaneſs of theſe days, in turning Churches into ſtables; for ſinful and polluted thoughts are much the worſe ſort of beaſts.

In his Houſe.

14. The ſecond thing to which reſpect belongs, is his Revenue or Income; that is, whatſoever is his peculiar Poſſeſſions, ſet apart for the maintenance of thoſe that attend his ſervice; thoſe were the prieſts in time of the Law, and miniſters of the Goſpel now with us: And whatever is thus ſet apart, we muſt look on with ſuch reſpect, as not to dare to turn it to any other uſe. Of this ſort ſome are the free-will offerings of men, who have ſometimes of their own accord given ſome of their goods or land to this holy uſe; and whatſoever is ſo given, can neither, by the perſon that gave, nor any other, be taken away without that great ſin of Sacrilege.

His Poſſeſſions.

15. But beſides theſe, there was among the *Jews*, and hath always been in all Chriſtian nations, ſomething allotted by the law of the nation, for the ſupport and maintenance of thoſe that attend the ſervice of God. And it is but juſt and neceſſary it ſhould be ſo, that thoſe, who by undertaking that calling, are taken off from the ways of gaining a livelihood in the world, ſhould be provided for by them, whoſe ſouls they watch over. And therefore it is moſt reaſonable, which the Apoſtle urges in this matter, 1 *Cor.* 9. 11. *If we have ſown unto you ſpiritual things, is it a great thing if we ſhall reap your carnal things?* That is, it is moſt unreaſonable for men to grudge the beſtowing a few carnal things, the outward neceſſaries of this temporal life, on them from whom they receive ſpiritual things, even inſtruction and aſſiſtance towards the obtaining of an eternal life.

16. Now whatſoever is thus appointed for this uſe, may by no means be employed to any other: And therefore thoſe tithes, which are here by law allotted for the maintenance of the miniſtry, muſt by no means be kept back, nor any tricks or ſhifts uſed to avoid the payment, either in whole or in part. For, firſt, it is certain that it is as truly theft as any other robbery can be; Miniſters having right to their tithes by the ſame law, which gives any other man right to his eſtate. But then, ſecondly, it is another manner of robbery than we think of, it is a robbing of God, whoſe ſervice they were given to maintain; and that you may not doubt the truth of this, it is no more than God himſelf hath ſaid of it, *Mal.* 3. 8. *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me; yet ye ſay, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.* Here it is moſt plain, that in God's account the withholding tithes is a robbing of him. And if you pleaſe, you may in the next verſe ſee what the gain of this robbery amounts to, *Ye are curſed with a curſe.* A curſe is all that is gotten by it; and common experience ſhews

The great ſin of Sacrilege.

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us, that Gods vengeance doth in a remarkable manner pursue this sin of Sacrilege, whether it be that of withholding tithes, or the other of seising on those possessions, which have been voluntarily consecrated to God. Men think to enrich themselves by it, but it usually proves directly contrary; this unlawful gain becomes such a canker in the estate, as often eats out even that we had a just title to: And therefore, if you love (I will not say your souls, but) your estates, preserve them from that danger by a strict care never to meddle with any thing set apart for God.

The Punishment.

The Times for his Service.

17. A Third thing wherein we are to express our reverence to God, is the hallowing of the times set apart for his Service. He, who hath given all our time, requires some part of it to be paid back again as a rent or tribute of the whole. Thus the *Jews* kept holy the Seventh day, and we Christians the *Sunday* or *Lord's Day*; the *Jews* were in their Sabbath especially to remember the Creation of the World, and we in ours, the Resurrection of Christ, by which a way is made for us into that better world we expect hereafter. Now this day thus set apart is to be employed in the Worship and Service of God, and that first, more solemnly and publickly in the congregation, from which no man must then absent himself without a just cause; and secondly, privately at home in praying with, and instructing our families, or else in the yet more private duties of the closet, a man's own private prayers, reading, meditation, and the like.

Lord's Day.

And that we may be at leisure for these, a rest from all worldly business is commanded: Therefore let no man think that a bare rest from labour is all that is requir'd of him on the Lord's Day; but the time which he saves from the works of his calling, he is to lay out on those spiritual duties. For the Lord's Day was never ordained to give us a pretence for idleness, but only to change our employment from worldly to heavenly, much less was it meant that, by our rest from our callings, we should have more time free to bestow upon our sins, as too many do, who are more constant on that day at the Alehouse than the Church. But this rest was commanded, first, to shadow out to us that rest from sin, which we are bound to all the days of our lives; and, secondly, to take us off from our worldly business, and to give us time to attend the service of God, and the need of our souls.

18. And surely, if we rightly consider it, it is a very great benefit to us, that there is such a set time thus weekly returning for that purpose. We are very intent and busie upon the world; and if there were not some such time appointed to our hands, it is to be doubted we should hardly allot any our selves; and then what a starved condition must these poor souls of ours be in, that shall never be afforded a meal? Whereas now there is a constant diet provided for them; every *Sunday*, if we will conscionably employ it, may be a festival day to them, may bring them in such spiritual food, as may nourish them to eternal life. We are not to look upon this day with grudging, like those in *Amos* 8. 5. who ask, *When will the Sabbath be gone that we may set forth wheat?* As if that time were utterly lost, which were taken from our worldly business: But we are to consider it as the gainfullest, as the joyfullest day of the week, a day of harvest, wherein we are to lay up in store for the whole week, nay, for our whole lives.

The Feasts of the Church.

19. But besides this of the weekly Lord's Day, there are other times, which the Church hath set apart for the remembrance of some special mercies of God, such as the Birth and Resurrection of Christ, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, and the like; and these days we are to keep in that manner, which the Church hath ordered, to wit, in the solemn worship of God, and in particular thanksgiving for that special blessing we then remember. And surely whoever is truly thankful for those rich mercies, cannot think it too much to set apart some few days in a year for that purpose.

But then we are to look that our Feasts be truly spiritual, by employing the day thus holily, and not make it an occasion of intemperance and disorder, as too many do, who consider nothing in *Christmas*, and other good times, but the good cheer and jollity of them. For that is doing despite, instead of honour, to Christ, who came to bring all purity and soberness into the world, and therefore must not have that coming of his remember'd in any other manner.

20. Other days there are also set apart in memory of the Apostles, and other Saints, wherein we are to give hearty thanks to God for his graces in them; particularly, that they were made instruments of revealing to us *Christ Jesus*, and the way of salvation, as you know the Apostles were by their preaching throughout the world. And then farther, we are to meditate on those examples of holy life they have given us, and stir up our selves to the imitation thereof. And whoever does uprightly set himself to make these uses of the several holy days, will have cause, by the benefit he shall find from them, to thank, and not to blame the Church for ordering them.

21. Ano-

21. Another sort of days there are, which we are likewise to observe, and those are days of Fasting and Humiliation: And whatever of this kind the Church enjoins, whether constantly at set times of the year, or upon any special and more sudden occasion, we are to observe in such manner as she directs, that is, not only a bare abstaining from meat, which is only the body's punishment, but in afflicting our souls, humbling them deeply before God, in a hearty confessing, and bewailing of our own, and the Nation's sins, and earnest prayer for God's pardon and forgiveness, and for the turning away of those judgments which those sins have called for: But above all, in *turning our selves from our sins, loosing the bands of wickedness*, as *Isaiah* speaks, *Chap.* 58. 6. and exercising our selves in works of mercy, *dealing our bread to the hungry*, and the like, as it there follows. *The Fasts.*

22. Fourthly, we are to express our reverence to God, by honouring his Word; and this we must certainly do, if we do indeed honour him; there being no surer sign of our despising any person, than the setting light by what he says to us: As on the contrary, if we value one, every word he speaks will be of weight with us. Now this Word of God is expresly contained in the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testament, where he speaks to us, to shew us his will and our duty. And therefore to this Word of his we are to bear a wonderful respect, to look upon it as the rule by which we must frame all the actions of our life; and to that end to study it much, to read in it as often as we can, if it may be, never to let a day pass us without reading, or hearing some part of it read. *God's Word.* *The Holy Scriptures.*

23. But then that is not all: We must not only read, but we must mark what we read; we must diligently observe what duties there are, which God commands us to perform, what faults they are, which God there charges us not to commit, together with the rewards promised to the one, and the punishments threatned to the other. When we have thus marked, we must lay them up in our memory, not so loosely and carelesly, that they shall presently drop out again; but we must so fasten them there, by often thinking and meditating on them, that we may have them ready for our use. Now that use is the directing of our lives; and therefore, whenever we are tempted to the committing of any evil, we are then to call to mind, This is the thing which in such a Scripture is forbidden by God, and all his vengeances threatned against it; and so in like manner, when any opportunity is offered us of doing good, to remember, This is the Duty which I was exhorted to in such a Scripture, and such glorious Rewards promised to the doing of it; and by these considerations strengthen our selves for resistance of the evil, and performance of the good.

24. But besides this of the written Word, it hath pleased God to provide yet farther for our instruction by his Ministers, whose office it is to teach us God's will, not by saying any thing contrary to the written Word (for whatsoever is so, can never be God's will) but by explaining it, and making it easier to our understandings, and then applying it to our particular occasions, and exhorting and stirring us up to the practice of it: All which is the end at which first their Catechizing, and then their Preaching, aimeth. And to this we are to bear also a due respect, by giving diligent heed thereto, not only being present at Catechizings and Sermons, and either sleep out the time, or think of somewhat else, but carefully marking what is said to us. And surely if we did but rightly consider how mnch it concerns us, we should conclude it very reasonable for us to do so.

25. For first, as to that of Catechizing, it is the laying the foundation upon which all Christian practice must be built; for that is the teaching us our duty, without which it is impossible for us to perform it. And though it is true, that the Scriptures are the fountains from whence this knowledge of duty must be fetched, yet there are many, who are not able to draw it from this fountain themselves, and therefore it is absolutely necessary it should be thus brought to them by others. *Catechizing.*

26. This Catechizing is generally look'd on as a thing belonging only to the youth; and so indeed it ought; not because the oldest are not to learn, if they be ignorant, but because all children should be so instructed, that it should be impossible for them to be ignorant when they come to years. And it nearly concerns every parent, as they will free themselves from the guilt of their childrens eternal undoing, that they be careful to see them instructed in all necessary things; to which purpose it will be fit early to teach them some short Catechism, of which sort none so fit as the Church-Catechism: Yet are they not to rest on these endeavours of their own, but also to call in the Minister's help, that he may build them up farther in Christian knowledge.

27. But alas! it is too sure that parents have very much neglected this duty; and by that means it is that such multitudes of men and women, that are called Christians, know no more of Christ, or any thing that concerns their own souls, than the meerest heathen.

28. But

28. But although it were their parents fault, that they were not instructed when they were young, yet it is now their own, if they remain still ignorant; and it is sure it will be their own ruin and misery, if they wilfully continue so. Therefore whoever he be, of what age or condition soever, that is in this ignorant estate, or in any such degree of it, that he wants any part of necessary saving knowledge, let him, as he loves his soul, as ever he would escape eternal damnation, seek out for instruction, and let no fear of shame keep any from it: For, first, it is certain the shame belongs only to the wilful continuing in ignorance, to which the desire of learning is directly contrary, and is so far from a shameful, that it is a most commendable thing, and will be sure to be so accounted by all wise and good men. But, secondly, suppose some profane, senseless people should deride it, yet sure that shame were in all reason to be undergone joyfully, rather than venture on that confusion of face, which will at the day of Judgment befal those, who, to avoid a little false shame amongst men, have gone on in a wilful ignorance of their duty, which ignorance will be so far from excusing any sins they shall commit, that it adds one great and heavy sin to all the rest, even the despising that knowledge which is offer'd to them. How heinous a sin that is, you may learn in the 1st Chapter of the *Proverbs*, where *hating knowledge*, v. 29. is said to be the thing that draws down those sad vengeances foremention'd, even God's forsaking men, laughing at their calamity instead of helping them: Which is of all other conditions in the world, the most miserable; and surely they are madly desperate that will run themselves into it.

Preaching. 29. As for those, who have already this foundation laid by the knowledge of the grounds of Christian Religion, there is yet for them a farther help provided by Preaching: And it is no more than needs; for, God knows, those that understand their duty well enough, are too apt to forget it; nay, sometimes, by the violence of their own lusts to transgress it, even when they do remember it; and therefore it is very useful we should be put in mind of it, to prevent our forgetting, and also often exhorted and assisted to withstand those lusts which draw us to those transgressions. And to these purposes Preaching is intended; first, to warn us to be upon our guard against our spiritual enemy, and then to furnish us with weapons for the fight; that is, such means and helps, as may best enable us to beat off temptations, and get the victory over them.

30. Since therefore this is the end of Preaching, we must not think we have done our duty, when we have heard a Sermon, though never so attentively; but we must lay up in our hearts those instructions and advices we there meet with, and use them faithfully to that end of overcoming our sins. Therefore, whenever thou comest to the Physician of thy soul, do as thou wouldst with the Physician of thy body: Thou comest to him not only to hear him talk, and tell thee what will cure thee, but also to do according to his directions; and if thou dost not so here, thou art as vain as he that expects a bare receipt from his doctor shall cure him, though he never make use of it. Nay, thou art much more vain and ridiculous; for that, though it do him no good, will do him no harm; he shall never be the worse for having been taught a medicine, though he use it not: But in these spiritual receipts it is otherwise; if we use them not to our good, they will do us a great deal of harm; they will rise up in judgment against us, and make our condemnation so much the heavier. Beware therefore not to bring that danger upon thy self; but when thou hast heard a Sermon, consider with thy self what directions there were in it for enabling thee to eschew evil, or to do good. And, if there were any thing especially concern'd thy own bosom-sin, lay that close to thy heart, and all the week after make it matter of meditation; think of it even whilst thou art at thy work, if thou wantest other time; and not only think of it, but set to the practice of it, do what thou wert advised to, for the subduing sins, and quickening grace in thee. Finally, look carefully to practice the counsel of the Apostle, *Jam.* 1. 22. *Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.* To hope for good from the Word, without doing it, is, it seems, nothing but a deceiving our selves: Let us never therefore measure our godliness by the number of Sermons which we hear, as if the hearing many were the certain mark of a good Christian, but by the store of fruit we bring forth by them, without which all our hearing will serve but to bring us into that heavier portion of stripes, which belongs to him that *knows his Master's will and does it not*, Luke 12. 47. But this reverence, which is due to Preaching, we must not pay to all that is now-a-days called so: for, God knows, there are many *false prophets gone out into the world*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 *John* 4. 1. And now, if ever, is that advice of his necessary, *To try the spirits, whether they be of God.* But what I have said, I mean only of the Preaching of those, who first have a lawful calling to the office, and secondly, frame their doctrine according to the right

rule, the written Word of God. But if any man say, he is not able to judge whether the Doctrine be according to the Word or no, let him at least try it by the common known rules of duty which he doth understand; and if he find it a Doctrine giving men liberty to commit those things, which are by all acknowledged sins, such as rebellion, injustice, unmercifulness, uncleanness, or the like, he may conclude it is utterly contrary to God and his Word; and then abhorrence, and not reverence, belongs to it.

The Sacraments. 31. Fifthly, we are to express our honouring of God by reverencing his Sacraments. Those are two, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord. And this we are to do, first, by our high esteem of them; secondly, by our reverent usage of them: We are first to prize them at a high rate, looking on them as the instruments of bringing to us the greatest blessings we can receive. The first of them, Baptism, that enters us into covenant with God, makes us members of Christ, and so gives us right to all those precious benefits that flow from him, to wit, pardon of sins, sanctifying grace, and heaven it self, on condition we perform our parts of the covenant. And as for the Lord's Supper, that is not only a sign and remembrance of Christ and his Death; but it is actually the giving Christ, and all the fruits of his Death, to every worthy receiver; and therefore there is a most high estimation and value due to each of them.

Of Baptism. 32. And not only so, but, in the second place, we must shew our reverence in our usage of them; and that, first, *Before*; secondly, *At*; thirdly, *After* the time of receiving them. It is true, that the Sacrament of Baptism being now administred to us when we are infants, it is not to be expected of us, that we should in our own persons do any thing, either *Before* or *At* the time of receiving it: Those performances were strictly required of all persons, who were baptized when they were of years. But for us, it suffices to give us this right to Baptism, that we are born within the pale of the Church, that is, of Christian parents; and all that is required at that time is, what we can only perform by others, they in our stead promising, that when we come to years we will perform our parts of the covenant. But by how much the less we are then able to do so much, the greater bond lies on us to perform those after duties required of us, by which we are to supply the want of the former.

The Vow of Baptism. 33. Now if you would know what those duties are, look over those promises which your godfathers and godmothers then made in your name, and you may then learn them. I cannot give you them in a better form, than that of our Church's Catechism, which tells us, *That our godfathers and godmothers did promise and vow three things in our names; first, That we should forsake the Devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.* Where by the Devil is meant, first, the worshipping of all false gods, which is indeed but worshipping the Devil: A sin, which at the time of Christ's coming into the world, was very common, most part of mankind then living in that vile idolatry. And therefore, when Baptism was first ordained, it was but needful to make the forsaking of those false gods a principal part of the Vow. And though those false worships are now much rarer, yet there was one special part of them, which may be feared to be yet too common among us; and that is all sorts of uncleanness, which though we do not make ceremonies of our religion, as the heathens did of theirs, yet the committing thereof is a most high provocation in God's eyes, such as drew him to destroy whole *cities with fire and brimstone*, as you may read, Gen. 19. nay, *the whole world with water*, Gen. 6. and will not fail to bring down judgments, and strange ones, on any that continue therein; and therefore the forsaking them well deserves to be lookt on as an especial part of this promise. Besides this, all dealing with the Devil is here vowed against, whether it be by practising witchcraft our selves, or consulting with those that do, upon any occasion whatever, as the recovery of our health, our goods, or whatever else; for this is a degree of the former sin, it is the forsaking of the Lord, and setting up the Devil for our God, whilst we go to him in our needs for help.

34. But we also renounce *all the works of the Devil*; and those are either in general all those that the Devil tempts us to, or else those particular kinds of sin, which have most of his image on them; that is, those which he himself most practises; such are pride, (which brought him from being an angel of light to the accursed condition he is now in) and lying: He is, as our Saviour saith, *John* 8. 44. *a lyar, and the father of it*; And such also are malice and envy, especially killing and destroying of others, for he was a *murderer from the beginning*, John 8. 44. But above all there is nothing wherein we become so like him, as in tempting and drawing others to sin, which is his whole trade and business, and if we make it any part of ours, we become like that *roring lion, that goes about seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. 5. 8.

35. The second thing we vow to forsake, is the *pomps and vanities of this wicked world.* By the pomps and vanities there are several things meant; some of them such as were used by the heathens in some unlawful sports of theirs, wherein we are not now so much concerned, there being none of them remaining among us; but besides that, there is meant all excess, either in diet, or sports, or apparel, when we keep not those due measures, which, either by the general rules of sobriety, or the particular circumstances of our qualities and callings, we are bound to. Next, by the wicked world, we may understand, first, the wealth and greatness of the world, which, though we do not so totally renounce, that it is unlawful for a Christian to be either rich or great; yet we thus far promise to forsake them, that we will not set our hearts upon them, nor either get or keep them by the least unlawful means. Secondly, by the wicked World we may understand the companies and customs of the world, which, so far as they are wicked, we here renounce; that is, we promise never to be drawn by company to the commission of a sin, but rather to forsake the most delightful company, than to be ensnared by it; nor yet by custom, but rather venture the shame of being thought singular, ridiculous persons, walk as it were in a path by our selves, than put our selves into that *broad way that leads to destruction,* by giving our selves over to any sinful custom, how common soever it be grown. If this part of our vow were but throughly considered, it would arm us against most of the temptations the world offers us; company and custom being the two special instruments, by which it works on us.

36. A third thing we renounce, is, *all the sinful lusts of the flesh;* where the flesh is to be understood in that sense, wherein the Scripture often uses it, for the fountain of all disordered affections. For though those unclean desires, which we ordinarily call the lusts of the flesh, are here meant, yet they are not the only things here contained, there being divers other things, which the Scripture calls *the works of the flesh;* I cannot better inform you of them, than by setting down the list St. *Paul* gives of them, *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, 21. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.* This, with those other descriptions you will find scattered in several places of Scripture, will shew you there are many things contained in this part of your Vow, the *forsaking all the sinful lusts of the flesh.*

37. The second thing our godfathers and godmothers promised for us, was, That *we should believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith.* These we have summed up together in that which we call the Apostles Creed, which, since we promise to believe, we are supposed also to promise to learn them; and that not only the words, but likewise the plain sense of them; for who can believe what he either never heard of, or knows not any thing of the meaning of it? Now by this believing is meant, not only the consenting to the truth of them, but also the living like them that do believe. As for example, our believing that God created us, should make us live in that subjection and obedience to him, which becomes creatures to their Creator; the believing that Christ redeemed us, should make us yield up our selves to him as his purchase, to be disposed wholly by him, and imployed only in his service; the believing a judgment to come, should give us care so to walk, that we may not be condemned in it; and our believing the life everlasting, should make us diligent so to employ our short moment of time here, that our everlasting life may be a life of joy, not of misery, to us. In this manner, from all the Articles of the Creed, we are to draw motives to confirm us in all Christian practice, to which end it is that our learning and believing of them tends; and therefore without it we are very far from making good this part of our Vow, the *believing all the Articles of the Christian Faith.*

38. The last part of our Vow is, that we *should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our lives.* Where, by *our keeping God's holy will and commandments,* is meant, our doing of all those things which he hath made known to us to be his will we should perform; wherein he hath given us his holy Word to instruct us, and teach us what it is that he requires of us; and now he expects that we should faithfully do it without favouring our selves in the breach of any one of his commands. And then in this entire obedience we must walk *all the days of our lives;* that is, we must go on in a constant course of obeying God; not only fetch some few steps in his ways, but walk in them, and that not for some part of our time, but *all the days of our lives,* never turn out of them; but go on constantly in them as long as we live in this world.

39. Having now thus briefly explained to you this Vow made at your BAPTISM, all I shall add concerning it, is only to remember you, how nearly you are concerned in the keeping it: And that, first, in respect of justice; secondly, in respect of advantage and benefit. That you are in justice bound to it, I need say no more, but that it is a promise; and, you know, justice requires of every man the keeping of his promise. But then this is of *all other* promises the most solemn and binding; for it is a Vow, that is, a promise made to God; and therefore we are not only unjust, but forsworn, whenever we break any part of it.

The strict obligation of this Vow of Baptism.

40. But, secondly, we are also highly concerned to keep it, in respect of our own benefit. I told you before, that Baptism entred us into covenant with God. Now a covenant is made up of two parts, that is, something promised by the one party, and something by the other of the parties that make the covenant: And if one of them break his part of the covenant, that is, perform not what he hath agreed to, he can in no reason look that the other should make good his. And so it is here, God doth indeed promise those benefits beforementioned, and that is his part of the covenant. But then we also undertake to perform the several things contained in this Vow of Baptism, and that is our part of it; and unless we do indeed perform them, God is not tied to make good his, and so we forfeit all those precious benefits and advantages, we are left in that natural and miserable state of ours, *children of wrath, enemies to God, and heirs of eternal damnation.* And now what can be the pleasure that any or all sins can afford us, that can make us the least degree of recompence for such a loss, the loss of God's favour and grace here, and the loss of our own souls hereafter? For, as our Saviour saith, *Mark* 8. 36. *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Yet this mad bargain we make, whenever we break any part of this our Vow of Baptism. It therefore most nearly concerns us to consider sadly of it, to remember that every sin we commit is a direct breach of this our Vow; and therefore, when thou art tempted to any sin, seem it never so light, say not of it as *Lot did of Zoar*, Gen. 19. 20. *Is it not a little one?* But consider, that whatever it is, thou hast in thy Baptism vowed against it, and then be it never so little, it draws a great one at the heels of it, no less than that of being forsworn, which whoever commits, God hath in the third Commandment pronounced, *He will not hold him guiltless.* And that we may the better keep this Vow, it will be very useful often to repeat to our selves the several branches of it, that so we may still have it ready in our minds to set against all temptations; and surely it is so excellent a weapon, that, if we do not either cast it aside, or use it very negligently, it will enable us, by God's help, to put to flight our spiritual adversary. And this is that reverence we are to pay to this first Sacrament, that of Baptism.

SUNDAY III.

Of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; *Of Preparation before, as Examination; Of Repentance, Faith, Obedience; Of Duties to be done at the Receiving, and afterwards,* &c.

Sect. 1. NOW follows the reverence due to the Sacrament of the LORD's SUPPER: And in this I must follow my first division, and set down, first, what is to be done *Before*; secondly, *At*; and thirdly, *After* the time of receiving; for in this Sacrament we cannot be excused from any one of these, though in the former we are.

The Lord's Supper.

2. And first, for that which is to be done *Before*; St. *Paul* tells us it is Examination, 1 *Cor.* 11. 28. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.* But before I proceed to the particulars of this Examination, I must in the general tell you, that the special business we have to do in this Sacrament, is to repeat and renew that Covenant we made with God in our Baptism; which we having many ways grievously broken, it pleases God in his great mercy to suffer us to come to the renewing of it in this Sacrament, which if we do in sincerity of heart, he hath promised to accept us, and to give us all those benefits in this, which he was ready to bestow in the other Sacrament, if we had not by our own fault forfeited them. Since then the renewing of our Covenant is our business at this time, it follows that these

Things to be done before receiving. Examination.

three things are necessary towards it; first, that we understand what the covenant is; secondly, that we consider what our breaches of it have been; and thirdly, that we resolve upon a strict observance of it for the rest of our life. And the trying our selves in every one of these particulars, is that Examination, which is required of us *before* we come to this Sacrament.

3. And first, we are to examine, whether we understand what this covenant is: This is exceeding necessary, as being the foundation of both the other; for it is neither possible to discover our past sins, nor to settle purposes against them for the future, without it. Let this therefore be your first business; try whether you rightly understand what that covenant is, which you entred into at your Baptism, what be the mercies promised on God's part, and the duties on yours. And because the covenant, made with each of us in Baptism, is only the applying to our particulars the covenant made by God in Christ with all mankind in general, you are to consider whether you understand that; if you do not, you must immediately seek for instruction in it; and, till you have means of gaining better, look over what is briefly said in the entrance to this treatise, concerning the *Second Covenant*, which is the foundation of that covenant, which God makes with us in our Baptism. And because you will there find, that obedience to all God's commands is the condition required of us, and is also that which we expresly vow in our Baptism, it is necessary you should likewise know what those commands of God are. Therefore, if you find you are ignorant of them, never be at rest till you have got your self instructed in them, and have gained such a measure of knowledge, as may direct you to do that *Whole Duty of Man*, which God requires. And the giving thee this instruction is the only aim of this Book, which, the more ignorant thou art, the more earnestly I shall intreat thee diligently to read. And if thou hast heretofore approached to this holy Sacrament in utter ignorance of these necessary things, bewail thy sin in so doing, but presume not to come again, till thou hast, by gaining this necessary knowledge, fitted thy self for it, which thou must hasten to do. For though no man must come to the Sacrament in such ignorance, yet if he wilfully continue in it, that will be no excuse to him for keeping from this holy Table.

4. The second part of our Examination is concerning our breaches of this covenant; and here thou wilt find the use of that knowledge I spake of. For there is no way of discovering what our sins have been, but by trying our actions by that which should be the rule of them, the Law of God. When therefore thou settest to this part of Examination, remember what are the several branches of thy duty, and then ask thy own heart in every particular, how thou hast performed it. And content not thy self with knowing in general, that thou hast broken God's Law, but do thy utmost to discover in what particulars thou hast done so. Recal, as well as thou canst, all the passages of thy life, and in each of them, consider what part of that duty has been transgrest by it; and that not only in the grosser act, but in word also, nay, even in thy most secret thoughts: For, though man's law reaches not to them, yet God's doth; so that whatever he forbids in the act, he forbids likewise in the thoughts and desires, and sees them as clearly as our most publick acts. This particular search is exceeding necessary; for there is no promise of forgiveness of any sin, but only to him that confesseth and forsaketh it. Now to both these it is necessary that we have a direct and particular knowledge of our sin. For how can he either confess his sin, that knows not his guilt of it? or how can he resolve to forsake it, that discerns not himself to have formerly cleaved to it? Therefore we may surely conclude, that this Examination is not only useful, but necessary towards a full and compleat repentance; for he that does not take this particular view of his sins, will be likely to repent but by halves, which will never avail him towards his pardon; nothing but an entire forsaking of every evil way being sufficient for that. But surely, of all other times, it concerns us, that when we come to the Sacrament, our repentance be full and compleat; and therefore, this strict search of our own hearts is then especially necessary: For although it be true, that it is not possible, by all our diligence, to discover or remember every sin of our whole lives; and though it be also true, that what is so unavoidably hid from us, may be forgiven without any more particular confession than that of *David*, Psal. 19. 12. *Cleanse thou me from my secret faults*, yet this will be no plea for us, if they come to be secret only, because we are negligent in searching. Therefore take heed of deceiving thy self in this weighty business, but search thy soul to the bottom, without which it is impossible that the wounds thereof should ever be throughly cured.

Sins. Several sorts.

5. And as you are to enquire thus narrowly concerning the several sorts of sins, so also must you concerning the degrees of them; for there are divers circumstances, which increase and heighten the sin. Of this sort there are many; as first, when we sin against knowledge,

knowledge, that is, when we certainly know such a thing to be a sin, yet for the present pleasure or profit (or whatever other motive) adventure on it. This is by Christ himself adjudged to be a great heightning of the sin; *He that knows his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*, Luke 12.47. Secondly, when we sin with deliberation, that is, when we do not fall into it of a sudden, e'er we are aware, but have time to consider of it; this is another degree of the sin: But thirdly, a yet higher is, when we do it against the resistances and checks of our own conscience, when that at the time tells us, This thing thou oughtest not to do; nay, lays before us the danger, as well as the sin of it; yet in spight of these admonitions of conscience we go on and commit the sin; this is a huge increase of it, such as will raise the least sin into a most high provocation. For it is plain, a sin thus committed must be a wilful one, and then, be the matter of it never so light, it is most heinous in God's eyes. Nay, this is a circumstance of such force, that it may make an indifferent action, that is in it self no sin, become one. For though my conscience should err, in telling me such a thing were unlawful, yet, so long as I were so persuaded, it were a sin for me to do that thing; for in that case my will consents to the doing a thing, which I believe to be displeasing to God; and God (who judges us by our wills, not understandings) imputes it to me as a sin, as well as if the thing were in it self unlawful. And therefore surely we may conclude, that any thing, which is in it self sinful, is made much more so by being committed against the checks of conscience. A fourth aggravation of a sin is, when it hath been often repeated; for then there is not only the guilt of so many more acts, but every act grows also so much worse, and more inexcusable. We always judge thus in faults committed against our selves; we can forgive a single injury more easily than the same, when it hath been repeated; and the oftner it hath been so repeated, the more heinous we account it. And so surely it is in faults against God also. Fifthly, the sins which have been committed after vows and resolutions of amendment, are yet more grievous; for that contains also the breaking of those promises. Somewhat of this there is in every wilful sin, because every such is a breach of that Vow we make at Baptism. But besides that, we have since bound our selves by new vows, if at no other time, yet surely at our coming to the Lord's Supper, that being (as was formerly said) purposely to repeat our Vows of Baptism. And the more of these vows we have made, so much the greater is our guilt, if we fall back to any sin we then renounced. This is a thing very well worth weighing; and therefore examine thy self, particularly at thy approach to the Sacrament, concerning thy breaches of former vows made at the holy Table. And if, upon any other occasion, as sickness, trouble of mind, or the like, thou hast at any time made any other, call thy self to a strict account how thou hast performed them also, and remember that every sin committed against such vows, is, besides its own natural guilt, a perjury likewise. Sixthly, a yet higher step is, when a sin hath been so often committed, that we are come to a custom and habit of it; and that is indeed a high degree.

6. Yet even of habits some are worse than others; as, first, If it be so confirmed, that we are come to a hardness of heart, have no sense at all of the sin; or, secondly, if we go on in it against any extraordinary means used by God to reform us, such as sickness, or any other affliction, which seems to be sent on purpose for our reclaiming; or, thirdly, if all reproofs and exhortations, either of ministers or private friends, work not on us, but either make us angry at our reprovers, or set us on defending the sin; or, lastly, if this sinful habit be so strong in us, as to give us a love to the sin, not only in our selves, but in others; if as the Apostle saith, *Rom.* 1. 32. *We do not only do the things, but take pleasure in them that do them*, and therefore entice and draw as many as we can into the same sins with us: Then it is risen to the highest step of wickedness, and is to be lookt on as the utmost degree both of sin and danger. Thus you see how you are to examine your selves concerning your sins, in each of which you are to consider how many of these heightning circumstances there have been, that so you may aright measure the heinousness of them.

7. Now the end of this examination is to bring you to such a sight of your sins, as may truly humble you, make you sensible of your own danger, that have provoked so great a Majesty, who is able so easily to revenge himself upon you: And that will surely, even to the most carnal heart, appear a reasonable ground of sorrow. But that is not all; it must likewise bring you to a sense and abhorrence of your baseness and Ingratitude, that have thus offended so good and gracious a God, that have made such unworthy and unkind returns to those tender and rich mercies of his. And this consideration especially must melt your hearts into a deep sorrow and contrition, the degree whereof must be in some measure answerable to the degree of your sins. And the *Humiliation.*

greater it is, provided it be not such as shuts up the hope of God's mercy, the more acceptable it is to God, who hath promised not to *despise a broken and contrite heart*, Psalm 51. 17. And the more likely it will be also to bring us to amendment: For if we have once felt what the smart of a wounded spirit is, we shall have the less mind to venture upon sin again.

8. For when we are tempted with any of the short pleasures of sin, we may then out of our own experience, set against them the sharp pains and terrors of an accusing conscience, which will, to any that hath felt them, be able infinitely to outweigh them. Endeavour therefore to bring your selves to this melting temper, to this deep unfeigned sorrow, and that not only for the danger you have brought upon your self; for though that be a consideration, which may and ought to work sadness in us, yet where that alone is the motive of our sorrow, it is not that sorrow which will avail us for pardon: And the reason of it is clear; for that sorrow proceeds only from the love of our selves; we are sorry because we are like to smart: But the sorrow of a true penitent must be joyned also with the love of God, and that will make us grieve for having offended him, though there were no punishment to fall upon our selves. The way then to stir up this sorrow in us is, first, To stir up our love of God, by repeating to our selves the many gracious acts of his mercy towards us, particularly that of his sparing us, and not cutting us off in our sins. Consider with thy self, how many and how great provocations thou hast offered him, perhaps in a continued course of many years wilful disobedience, for which thou mightest with perfect justice have been e'er this sent quick into hell: Nay, possibly, thou hast before thee many examples of less sinners than thou art, who have been suddenly snatcht away in the midst of their sins. And what cause canst thou give, why thou hast thus long escaped, but only because his eye hath spared thee? And what cause of that sparing, but his tender compassions towards thee, his unwillingness that thou shouldst perish? This consideration, if it be prest home upon thy soul, cannot choose (if thy heart be not as hard as the nether milstone) but awake somewhat of love in thee towards this gracious, this long-suffering God; and that love will certainly make it appear to thee, that it is an *evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord*, Jer. 2. 19. that thou hast made such wretched requitals of so great mercy; it will make thee both ashamed and angry at thy self, that thou hast been such an unthankful creature. But if the consideration of this one sort of mercy, God's forbearance only, be such an engagement and help to this godly sorrow, what will then be the multitude of those other mercies, which every man is able to reckon up to himself? And therefore let every man be as particular in it as he can, call to mind as many of them as he is able, that so he may attain to the greater degree of true Contrition.

Contrition.

9. And to all these endeavours must be added earnest prayers to God, that he, by his holy Spirit, would shew you your sins, and soften your hearts, that you may throughly bewail and lament them.

Confession.

10. To this must be joined an humble Confession of sins to God, and that not only in general, but also in particular, as far as your memory of them will reach, and that with all those heightning circumstances of them, which you have by the forementioned examination discovered. Yea, even secret and forgotten sins must in general be acknowledged; for it is certain there are multitudes of such: So that it is necessary for every one of us to say with *David*, Psalm 19. 12. *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from my secret faults*. When you have thus confest your sins with this hearty sorrow, and sincere hatred of them, you may then, (and not before) be concluded to feel so much of your disease, that it will be seasonable to apply the remedy.

Faith.

11. In the next place therefore, you are to look on him *whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation for our sins*, Rom. 3. 25. *even Jesus Christ, that Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*, John 1. 29. and earnestly beg of God, that by his most precious blood your sins may be washed away; and that God would for his sake be reconciled to you. And this you are to believe will surely be done, if you do for the rest of your time forsake your sins, and give your selves up sincerely to obey God in all his commands. But without that, it is vain to hope any benefit from Christ, or his sufferings. And therefore the next part of your preparation must be the setting those resolutions of obedience, which I told you was the third thing you are to examine your selves of before your approach to the holy Sacrament.

Resolutions of Obedience.

12. Concerning the particulars of this resolution, I need say no more, but that it must answer every part and branch of our duty; that is, we must not only in general resolve that we will observe God's Commandments, but we must resolve it for every commandment by it self; and especially, where we have found our selves most to have

failed heretofore, there especially to renew our resolutions. And herein it nearly concerns us to look that these resolutions be sincere and unfeigned, and not only such slight ones as people use out of custom to put on at their coming to the Sacrament, which they never think of keeping afterwards: For this is a certain truth, that whosoever comes to this holy Table without an entire hatred of every sin, comes unworthily; and it is as sure, that he that doth intirely hate all sin, will resolve to forsake it; for you know forsaking naturally follows hatred; no man willingly abides with the thing or person he hates. And therefore he that doth not so resolve, as that God, the searcher of hearts, may approve it as sincere, cannot be supposed to hate sin, and so cannot be a worthy receiver of that holy Sacrament. Therefore try your resolutions throughly, that you deceive not your selves in them: It is your own great danger if you do; for it is certain you cannot deceive God, nor gain acceptation from him by any thing which is not perfectly hearty and unfeigned.

13. Now, as you are to resolve on this new Obedience, so you are likewise to resolve on the Means, which may assist you in the performance of it: And therefore consider in every duty what are the Means that may help you in it, and resolve to make use of them, how uneasy soever they be to your flesh; so on the other side, consider what things they are, that are likely to lead you to sin, and resolve to shun and avoid them: This you are to do in respect of all sins whatever, but especially in those whereof you have formerly been guilty. For these it will not be hard for you to find by what steps and degrees you were drawn into it, what company, what occasion it was that ensnared you, as also to what sort of temptations you are aptest to yield. And therefore you must particularly fence your self against the sin, by avoiding those occasions of it. *Of the Means.*

14. But it is not enough that you resolve you will do all this hereafter; but you must instantly set to it, and begin the course by doing at the present whatsoever you have opportunity of doing. And there are several things which you may, nay, must do at the present, before you come to the Sacrament.

15. As first, you must cast off every sin, not bring any one unmortified lust with you to that Table; for it is not enough to purpose to cast them off afterwards, but you must then actually do it, by withdrawing all degrees of love and affection from them; you must then give a bill of divorce to all your old beloved sins, or else you are in no way fit to be married to Christ. The reason of this is clear; for this Sacrament is our spiritual nourishment. Now, before we can receive spiritual nourishment, we must have spiritual life (for no man gives food to a dead person.) But whosoever continues not only in the act, but in the love of any one known sin, hath no spiritual life, but is in God's account no better than a dead carcass, and therefore cannot receive that spiritual food. It is true, he may eat the bread, and drink the wine; but he receives not Christ, but instead of him, that which is most dreadful; the Apostle will tell you what, 1 *Cor.* 11. 29. *He eats and drinks his own damnation.* Therefore you see how great a necessity lies on you thus actually to put off every sin before you come to this Table. *Present renouncing of sin.*

16. And the same necessity lies on you for a second thing to be done at this time; and that is, the putting your soul into a heavenly and christian temper, by possessing it with all those graces, which may render it acceptable in the eyes of God. For when you have turned out Satan and his accursed train, you must not let your soul lie empty; if you do, Christ tells you, *Luke* 11. 26. *He will quickly return again, and your last estate shall be worse than your first.* But you must, by earnest prayer, invite into it the holy Spirit with his graces; or, if they be in some degree there already, you must pray that he will yet more fully possess it, and you must quicken and stir them up. *Embracing Virtue.*

17. As for example, you must quicken your humility, by considering your many and great sins; your Faith, by meditating on God's promises to all penitent sinners; your love to God, by considering his mercies, especially those remembred in the Sacrament, his giving Christ to die for us; and your love to your neighbour, nay, to your enemies, by considering that great example of his suffering for us, that were enemies to him. And it is most particularly required of us, when we come to this Table, that we copy out this pattern of his, in a perfect forgiveness of all that have offended us; and not only forgiveness, but such a kindness also, as will express it self in all offices of love and friendship to them. *Quickening of Graces.*

18. And if you have formerly so quite forgot that blessed example of his, as to do the direct contrary; if you have done any unkindness or injury to any person, then you are to seek forgiveness from him; And to that end, first, acknowledge your fault; and secondly, restore to him, to the utmost of your power, whatsoever you have deprived *Charity.*

him of, either in goods or credit. This reconciliation with our brethren, is absolutely necessary towards the making any of our services acceptable with God, as appears by that precept of Christ, Matth. 5. 23, 24. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Where you see, that though the gift be already at the altar, it must rather be left there unoffered, than be offered by a man that is not at perfect peace with his neighbour. And if this Charity be so necessary in all our services, much more in this, where, by a joynt partaking in the same holy mysteries, we signifie our being united and knit, not only to Christ our head, but also to each other, as fellow-members. And therefore, if we come with any malice in our hearts, we commit an act of the highest hypocrisie, by making a solemn profession in the Sacrament of that Charity and brotherly love, whereof our hearts are quite void.

Devotion. 19. Another most necessary grace at this time is that of Devotion, for the raising whereof, we must allow our selves some time to withdraw from our worldly affairs, and wholly to set our selves to this business of preparation; one very special part of which preparation lies in raising up our souls to a devout and heavenly temper. And to that it is most necessary, that we cast off all thoughts of the world; for they will be sure, as so many clogs, to hinder our souls in their mounting towards heaven. A special exercise of this Devotion is prayer, wherein we must be very frequent and earnest at our coming to the Sacrament, this being one great instrument wherein we must obtain all those other graces requir'd in our preparation. Therefore be sure this be not omitted; for if you use never so much endeavour besides, and leave out this, it is the going to work in your own strength, without looking to God for his help; and then it is impossible you should prosper in it: *For we are not able of our selves to think any thing as of our selves, but our sufficiency is of God,* 2 Cor. 3. 5. Therefore be instant with him so to assist you with his grace, that you may come so fitted to this holy Table, that you may be partakers of the benefits there reached out to all worthy receivers.

Necessity of these Graces. 20. These and all other spiritual Graces our souls must be clothed with, when we come to this Feast; for this is that wedding-garment, without which whosoever comes, is like to have the entertainment mentioned in the parable of him, who came to the marriage without a *wedding-garment,* Matt. 22. 13. *who was cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth:* For tho' it is possible he may sit it out at the present, and not be snatched from the table, yet St. *Paul* assures him, *he drinks damnation to himself;* and how soon it may fall on him is uncertain: But it is sure it will, if repentance prevent it not; and as sure, that whenever it does come, it will be intolerable: *For who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?* Isa. 33. 14.

The Usefulness of a Spiritual Guide. 21. I shall add but one thing more concerning the things which are to be done *Before* the Sacrament, and that is an advice, that if any person, upon a serious view of himself, cannot satisfie his own soul of his sincerity, and so doubts whether he may come to the Sacrament, he do not rest wholly on his own judgment in the case: For if he be a truly humble soul, it is likely he may judge too hardly of himself; if he be not, it is odds, but if he be left to the satisfying his own doubts, he will quickly bring himself to pass too favourable a sentence: Or, whether he be the one or the other, if he come to the Sacrament in that doubt, he certainly plunges himself into farther doubts and scruples, if not into sin. On the other side, if he forbear because of it, if that fear be a causeless one, then he groundlessly absents himself from that holy ordinance, and so deprives his soul of the benefits of it. Therefore in the midst of so many dangers, which attend the mistake of himself, I would, as I said before, exhort him not to trust to his own judgment, but to make known his case to some discreet and godly minister, and rather be guided by his, who will probably (if the case be duly and without any disguise discovered to him) be better able to judge of him, than he of him self. This is the counsel the Church gives in the exhortation before the Communion, where it is advised, That if any, by other means there forementioned, *cannot quiet his own conscience, but require farther counsel and comfort, then let him go to some discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief, that he may receive such ghostly counsel, advice, and comfort, that his conscience may be relieved,* &c. This is surely such advice, as should not be neglected, neither at the time of coming to the Sacrament, nor any other, when we are under any fear or reasons of doubt concerning the state of our souls. And for want of this many have run into very great mischief, having let the doubt fester so long, that it hath either plunged them into deep distresses of conscience, or, which is worse, they have, to still that disquiet within them, betaken them selves to all sinful pleasures, and so quite cast off all care of their souls.

22. But to all this it will perhaps be said, that this cannot be done without discovering the nakedness and blemishes of the soul, and there is shame in that, and therefore men are unwilling to do it. But to that I answer, That it is very unreasonable that should be a hindrance. For, first, I suppose you are to choose only such a person as will faithfully keep any secret you shall commit to him, and so it can be no publick shame you can fear. And if it be in respect of that single person, you need not fear that neither; for, supposing him a godly man, he will not think the worse of you, but the better, that you are so desirous to set all right between God and your soul. But if indeed there were shame in it, yet as long as it may be a means to cure both your trouble and your sin too (as certainly godly and faithful counsel may tend much to both) that shame ought to be despised; and it is sure it would, if we loved our souls as well as our bodies: For in bodily diseases, be they never so foul or shameful, we count him a fool who will rather miss the cure than discover it; and then it must here be so much a greater folly, by how much the soul is more precious than the body.

Not to be ashamed to discover our selves to one.

23. But God knows it is not only doubtful persons to whom this advice might be useful; there are others of another sort, whose confidence is their disease, who presume very groundlesly of the goodness of their estates; and for those it were most happy, if they could be brought to hear some more equal judgments than their own in this so weighty a business. The truth is, we are generally so apt to favour our selves, that it might be very useful for the most, especially the more ignorant sort, sometimes to advise with a spiritual guide, to enable them to pass right judgments on themselves; and not only so, but to receive directions how to subdue and mortifie those sins, they are most inclined to; which is a matter of so much difficulty, that we have no reason to despise any means that may help us in it.

As necessary to the confident as to the doubtful.

24. I have now gone through those several parts of duty we are to perform *Before* our receiving: In the next place, I am to tell you, what is to be done *At the time of Receiving*. When thou art at the holy Table, first, humble thy self in an unfeigned acknowledgment of thy great unworthiness to be admitted there; and to that purpose, remember again between God and thine own soul, some of thy greatest and foulest sins, thy breaches of former vows made at that Table, especially since thy last Receiving. Then meditate on those bitter Sufferings of Christ, which are set out to us in the Sacrament: When thou seest the bread broken, remember how his blessed Body was torn with nails upon the Cross; when thou seest the wine poured out, remember how his precious Blood was spilt there; and then consider it was thy sins that caused both. And here think how unworthy a wretch thou art, to have done that which occasioned such torments to him; how much worse than his very crucifiers. They crucified him once, but thou hast, as much as in thee lay, crucified him daily. They crucified him, because they knew him not, but thou hast known both what he is in himself, *The Lord of Glory*, and what he is to thee, a most tender and merciful Saviour; and yet thou hast still continued thus to crucifie him afresh. Consider this, and let it work in thee, first, a great sorrow for thy sins past, and then a great hatred and a firm resolution against them for the time to come.

At the time of Receiving. meditation of thy unworthiness.

The Sufferings of Christ.

25. When thou hast a while thus thought on these Sufferings of Christ, for the increasing thy humility and contrition, then, in the second place, think of them again, to stir up thy Faith; look on him as the Sacrifice offer'd up for thy sins, for the appeasing of God's wrath, and procuring his favour and mercies toward thee. And therefore believingly, yet humbly, beg of God to accept of that satisfaction made by his innocent and beloved Son, and for the merits thereof to pardon thee whatever is past, and to be fully reconciled to thee.

The Atonement wrought by them.

26. In the third place consider them again to raise thy Thankfulness. Think how much both of shame and pain he there endured, but especially those great agonies of his Soul, which drew from him that bitter cry, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matt. 27. 46. Now all this he suffered only to keep thee from perishing. And therefore consider what inexpressible Thanks thou owest him, and endeavour to raise thy soul to the most zealous and hearty Thanksgiving: For this is a principal part of duty at this time, the praising and magnifying that mercy which hath redeemed us by so dear a price. Therefore it will here well become thee to say with *David*, *I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord.*

The Thankfulness owing for them.

27. Fourthly, look on these Sufferings of Christ to stir up thy Love; and surely there cannot be a more effectual means of doing it; for here the Love of Christ to thee is most manifest, according to that of the Apostle, 1 *John* 3. 16. *Hereby perceive we the Love of God towards us, because he laid down his life for us*, and that even the highest degree of *Love*: for as himself tells us, *John* 15. 13. *Greater Love than this hath*

The great Love of Christ in them.

no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend. Yet even greater love than this had he; for he not only died, but died the most painful and most reproachful death, and that not only for his friends, but for his utter enemies. And therefore if, after all this love on his part, there be no return of love on ours, we are worse than the vilest sort of men; for even the *Publicans*, Matt. 5. 46. *love those that love them.* Here therefore chide and reproach thy self, that thy love to him is so faint and cool, when his to thee was so zealous and affectionate, and endeavour to enkindle this holy flame in thy soul, to love him in such a degree, that thou mayst be ready to copy out his example, to part with all things, yea, even life it self, whenever he calls for it, that is, whensoever thy obedience to any command of his, shall lay thee open to those sufferings; but in the mean time to resolve never again to make any league with his enemies, to entertain or harbour any sin in thy breast. But if there have any such hitherto remained with thee, make this the season to kill and crucifie it; offer it up at this instant a sacrifice to him who was sacrificed for thee, and particularly for that very end, that *he might redeem thee from all iniquity.* Therefore here make thy solemn resolutions to forsake every sin, particularly those into which thou hast most frequently fallen. And that thou mayst indeed perform those resolutions, earnestly beg of this crucified Saviour, that he will, by the power of his death, mortifie and kill all thy corruptions.

The Benefits of the New Covenant sealed in the Sacrament.

28. When thou art about to receive the consecrated Bread and Wine, remember that God now offers to seal to thee that new Covenant made with mankind in his Son. For since he gives that his Son in the Sacrament, he gives with him all the benefits of that Covenant, to wit, pardon of sins, sanctifying grace, and a title to an eternal inheritance. And here be astonished at the infinite goodness of God, who reaches out to thee so precious a treasure. But then remember, that this is all but on condition that thou perform thy part of the Covenant. And therefore settle in thy soul the most serious purpose of obedience; and then, with all possible devotion, joyn with the Minister in that short but excellent prayer used at the instant of giving the Sacrament; *The body of our Lord*, &c.

Upon receiving, give Thanks.

29. So soon as thou hast received, offer up thy devoutest praises for that great mercy, together with thy most earnest prayers for such assistance of God's Spirit, as may enable thee to perform the Vow thou hast now made. Then, remembring that Christ is *a propitiation not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world*, let thy charity

Pray.

reach as far as his hath done, and pray for all mankind, that every one may receive the benefit of that sacrifice of his; commend also to God the estate of the Church, that particularly whereof thou art a member; and forget not to pray for all to whom thou owest obedience, both in Church and State, and so go on to pray for such particular persons as either thy relations or their wants shall present to thee. If there be any collection for the poor, (as there always ought to be at this time) give freely according to thy ability; or if by the default of others, there be no such collection, yet do thou privately design something towards the relief of thy poor brethren, and be sure to give it the next fitting opportunity that offers it self. All this thou must contrive to do in the time that others are receiving, that so when the publick prayers after the administration begin, thou mayst be ready to join in them, which thou must likewise take care to do with all devotion. Thus much for behaviour *At* the time of receiving.

After the Sacrament.

Private Prayer and Thanksgiving.

30. Now follows the third and last thing, that is, What thou art to do *After* thy receiving. That which is immediately to be done, is, as soon as thou art retired from the congregation, to offer up again to God thy sacrifice of Praise for all those precious mercies conveyed to thee in that holy Sacrament; as also humbly to intreat the continued assistance of his grace, to enable thee to make good all those purposes of obedience thou hast now made. And in whatsoever thou knowest thy self most in danger, either in respect of any former habit, or natural inclination, there especially desire and earnestly beg his aid.

Not presently to fall to worldly Affairs.

31. When thou hast done thus, do not presently let thy self loose to thy worldly care and business; but spend all that day, either in meditating, praying, reading, good conferences, or the like; so as may best keep up that holy flame that is enkindled in thy heart. Afterwards, when thy calling requires thee to fall to thy usual affairs, do it, but yet still remember that thou hast a greater business than that upon thy hands;

To keep thy Resolutions still in memory.

that is, the performing of all those promises thou so lately madest to God: And therefore, whatever thy outward employments are, let thy heart be set on that, keep all the particulars of thy Resolutions in memory, and whenever thou art tempted to any

The Danger of breaking them.

of thy old sins, then consider, this is the thing thou so solemnly vowedst against; and withal remember what a horrible guilt it will be, if thou shouldst now wilfully do any thing contrary to that vow; yea, and what a horrible mischief also it will be to thy self:

For at thy receiving, God and thou entredst into covenant, into a league of friendship and kindness. And as long as thou keepest in that friendship with God, thou art safe; all the malice of men or devils can do thee no harm: For as the Apostle saith, *Rom.* 8. 31. *If God be for us, who can be against us?* but if thou breakest this league, (as thou certainly dost, if thou yieldest to any wilful sin) then God and thou art Enemies, and if all the world then were for thee, it could not avail thee.

Making God thy Enemy.

32. Nay, thou wilt get an enemy within thine own bosom, thy Conscience accusing and upbraiding thee; and when God and thine own Conscience are thus against thee, thou canst not but be extreamly miserable even in this life, besides that fearful expectation of wrath which awaits thee in the next. Remember all this when thou art set upon by any temptation, and then sure thou canst not but look upon that temptation as a cheat that comes to rob thee of thy peace, thy God, thy very soul. And then sure it will appear as unfit to entertain it, as thou wouldst think it to harbour one in thy house, who thou knowest came to rob thee of what is dearest to thee.

Thy own Conscience.

33. And let not any experience of God's mercy in pardoning thee heretofore, encourage thee again to provoke him; for besides that it is the highest degree of wickedness and unthankfulness to make that *goodness of his which should lead thee to repentance*, an Encouragement in thy sin: Besides this, I say, the oftner thou hast been pardoned, the less reason thou hast to expect it again, because thy sin is so much the greater, for having been committed against so much mercy. If a king have several times pardoned an offender, yet if he still return to commission of the same fault, the king will at last be forced, if he have any love to justice, to give him up to it. Now so it is here, God is as well just as merciful, and his justice will at last surely and heavily avenge the abuse of his mercy; and there cannot be a greater abuse of his mercy, than to sin in hope of it: So that it will prove a miserable deceiving of thy self thus to presume upon it.

God's former pardons no encouragement to sin.

34. Now this care of making good thy Vow, must not abide with thee some few days only, and then be cast aside, but it must continue with thee all thy days: For if thou break thy Vow, it matters not whether sooner or later. Nay, perhaps the guilt may, in some respects, be more, if it be late; for if thou hast for a good while gone on in the observance of it, that shews the thing is possible to thee; and so thy after-breaches are not of infirmity, because thou canst not avoid them, but of perverseness, because thou wilt not. Besides, the use of Christian walking must needs make it more easie to thee. For indeed all the difficulty of it is but from the custom of the contrary: And therefore if, after some acquaintance with it, when thou hast overcome somewhat of the hardness, thou shalt then give it over, it will be most inexcusable. Therefore, be careful all the days of thy life, to keep such a watch over thy self, and so to avoid all occasions of temptations, as may preserve thee from all wilful breaches of this Vow.

The Obligation of this Vow perpetual.

35. But though the obligation of every such single Vow reach to the utmost day of our lives, yet are we often to renew it, that is, we are often to receive the holy Sacrament; For that being the means of conveying to us so great and unvaluable benefits, and it being also a command of Christ, that we should *do this in remembrance of him*, we are, in respect both of reason and duty, to omit no fit opportunity of partaking of that holy Table. I have now shewed you what that reverence is, which we are to pay to God in this Sacrament.

Yet often to be renewed.

SUNDAY IV.

Honour due to God's Name, Sins against it; Blasphemy, Swearing; Of Assertory, Promissory, Unlawful Oaths; Of Perjury, Vain Oaths, and the Sin of them, &c.

Sect. 1. THE last thing wherein we are to express our reverence to him, is the Honouring of his Name. Now what this Honouring of his Name is, we shall best understand by considering what are the things by which it is dishonoured, the avoiding of which will be our way of Honouring it.

Honour due to God's Name.

The first is, all Blasphemies, or speaking any evil thing of God, the highest degree whereof is cursing him; or, if we do not speak it with our mouths, yet if we do it in

Sins against it.

our hearts, by thinking any unworthy thing of him, it is lookt on by God, who sees the heart, as the vilest dishonour. But there is also a Blasphemy of the actions, that is, when men, who profess to be the servants of God, live so wickedly, that they bring up an evil report of him whom they own as their Master and Lord. This Blasphemy the Apostle takes notice of, *Rom.* 2. 24. where he tells those, who profess to be observers of the law, *That by their wicked actions the Name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles.* Those Gentiles were moved to think ill of God, as the favourer of sin, when they saw those, who called themselves his servants, commit it.

Blasphemy.

Swearing.

A second way of dishonouring God's Name is by Swearing, and that is of two sorts, either by false Oaths, or else by rash and light ones. A false Oath may also be of two kinds, as first, that by which I affirm somewhat; or secondly, that by which I promise. The first is, when I say such or such a thing was done so or so, and confirm this saying of mine with an Oath: If then I know there be not perfect truth in what I say, this is a flat perjury, a downright being forsworn: Nay, if I swear to the truth of that whereof I am only doubtful, though the thing should happen to be true, yet it brings upon me the guilt of perjury; for I swear at a venture, and the thing might, for ought I know, be as well false as true; whereas I ought never to swear any thing, the truth of which I do not certainly know.

Assertory Oaths.

Promissory.

2. But besides this sort of Oaths, by which I affirm any thing, there is the other sort, that by which I promise somewhat. And that promise may be either to God or man; when it is to God, we call it a vow, of which I have already spoken under the heads of the Sacraments: I shall now only speak of that to man, and this may become a false Oath, either at, or after the time of taking it. At the time of taking, it is false, if either I have then no real purpose of making it good, or else take it in a sense different from that which I know he, to whom I make the Promise, understands it; for the use of Oaths being to assure the persons to whom they are made, they must be taken in their sense. But if I were never so sincere at the taking the Oath, if afterwards I do not perform it, I am certainly perjured.

Unlawful Oaths.

3. The nature of an Oath being thus binding, it nearly concerns us to look that the matter of our Oaths be lawful, for else we run our selves into a woful snare. For example, suppose I swear to kill a man; if I perform my Oath, I am guilty of murder; if I break it, of Perjury: And so I am under a necessity of sinning one way or other. But there is nothing puts us under a greater degree of this unhappy necessity, than when we swear two Oaths, whereof the one is directly cross and contradictory to the other: For if I swear to give a man my whole estate, and afterwards swear to give all, or part of that estate to another, it is certain I must break my Oath to one of them, because 'tis impossible to perform it to both: and so I must be under a necessity of being forsworn. And into this unhappy strait every man brings himself that takes any Oath, which crosses some other which he hath formerly taken; which should make all, that love either God or their own souls, resolve never thus miserably to entangle themselves, by taking one Oath cross and thwarting to another. But it may perhaps here be askt, What a person, that hath already brought himself into such a condition, shall do? I answer, he must first heartily repent of the great sin of taking the unlawful Oath, and then stick only to the lawful; which is all that is in his power towards the repairing his fault, and qualifying him for God's pardon for it.

God greatly dishonoured by Perjury.

4. Having said this concerning the kinds of this sin of Perjury, I shall only add a few words to shew you how greatly God's Name is dishonoured by it. In all Oaths, you know, God is solemnly called to witness the truth of that which is spoken: Now, if the thing be false, it is the basest affront and dishonour that can possibly be done to God. For it is in reason to signifie one of these two things, either that we believe he knows not whether we say true or no; (and that is to make him no God, to suppose him to be as deceivable and easie to be deluded as one of our ignorant neighbours) or else, that he is willing to countenance our lyes. The former robs him of that great Attribute of his, his knowing all things, and is surely a great dishonouring of him, it being even amongst men counted one of the greatest disgraces, to account a man fit to have cheats put upon him; yet even so we deal with God, if we venture to forswear upon a hope that God discerns it not. But the other is yet worse; for the supposing him willing to countenance our lies, is the making him a party in them; and is not only the making him no God, (it being impossible that God should either lye himself, or approve it in another) but it is the making him like the very Devil; for he it is that *is a lyar, and the father of it*, John 8. 44. And surely I need not say more, to prove that this is the highest degree of dishonouring God's Name.

5. But

The Punishments of it. 5. But if any yet doubt the heinousness of this sin, let him but consider what God himself says of it in the third Commandment, where he solemnly professes, *he will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain.* And sure, the adding that to this Commandment, and none of the rest, is the marking this out for a most heinous guilt. And if you look into *Zach.* 5. you will there find the Punishment is answerable, even to the utter destruction, not only of the man, but his house also. Therefore it concerns all men, as they love either their temporal or eternal welfare, to keep them most strictly from this sin.

Vain Oaths. But besides this of forswearing, I told you there was another sort of Oaths, by which God's Name is dishonoured: Those are the vain and light Oaths, such as are so usual in our common discourse, and are expresly forbidden by Christ, *Matth.* 5. 34. *But I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool:* Where you see we are not allowed to swear, even by meer creatures, because of the relation they have to God. How great a wickedness is it then to profane his holy Name by rash and vain Oaths? This is a sin that is (by I know not what charm of Satan's) grown into a fashion among us; and now its being so, draws daily more men into it. But it is to be remembred, that when we shall appear before God's judgment-seat, to answer for those profanations of his Name, it will be no excuse to say, It was the fashion to do so: It will rather be an increase of our guilt, that we have by our own practice helped to confirm that wicked custom, which we ought to have beat down and discountenanced.

The Sin of them. 6. And sure, whatever this profane age thinks of it, this is a sin of a very high nature. For, besides that it is a direct breach of the precept of Christ, it shews, first, a very mean and low esteem of God. Every Oath we swear is the appealing to God to judge the truth of what we speak; and therefore being of such greatness and majesty, requires that the matter concerning which we thus appeal to him, should be of great weight and moment, somewhat wherein either his own glory, or some considerable good of man is concerned. But when we swear in common discourse, it is far otherwise; and the triflingest or lightest thing serves for the matter of an Oath; nay, often men swear to such vain and foolish things, as a considering person would be ashamed barely to speak. And is it not a great despising of God, to call him solemnly to judge in such childish, such wretched matters? God is the great King of the world: Now though a king be to be resorted unto in weighty cases, yet sure he would think himself much despised, if he should be called to judge between boys at their childish games: And, God knows, many things whereto we frequently swear, are not of greater weight; and therefore are a sign that we do not rightly esteem of God.

They lead to Perjury. 7. Secondly, This common Swearing is a sin which leads directly to the former of Forswearing; for he that, by the use of swearing, hath made Oaths so familiar to him, will be likely to take the dreadfullest Oath without much consideration. For how shall he that swears hourly, look upon an Oath with any reverence? And he that doth not, it is his chance, not his care, that is to be thanked, if he keep from Perjury. Nay, further, he that swears commonly, is not only prepared to forswear, when a solemn Oath is tendred him, but in all probability does actually forswear himself often in these suddener Oaths; for, supposing them to come from a man e'er he is aware (which is the best can be said of them) what assurance can any man have, who swears e'er he is aware, that he shall not lye so to? And if he doth both together, he must necessarily be forsworn. But he that observes your common swearers, will be put past doubt that they are often forsworn: For they usually swear indifferently to things true or false, doubtful or certain. And I doubt not but if men, who are guilty of this sin, would but impartially examine their own practice, their hearts would second me in this observation.

No Temptation to them. 8. Thirdly, This is a sin to which there is no Temptation; there is nothing either of pleasure or profit got by it: Most other sins offer us somewhat, either of the one or the other, but this is utterly empty of both. So that in this sin the Devil does not play the merchant for our souls, as in others he does; he doth not so much as cheapen them, but we give them freely into his hands without any thing in exchange: There seems to be but one thing possible for men to hope to gain by it, and that is, to be believed in what they say, when they thus bind it by an Oath. But this also they constantly fail of; for there are none so little believed as the common swearers. And good reason; for he that makes no conscience thus to profane God's Name, why shall any man believe he makes any of lying? Nay, their forwardness to confirm every the slightest thing by an Oath, rather gives jealousie that they have some inward guilt of falseness, for which that Oath must be the cloak. And thus you see in how little stead it stands them even to this only purpose, for which they can pretend it useful; and to any other

advantage

advantage it makes not the least claim; and therefore is a sin without Temptation, and consequently without excuse: For it shews the greatest contempt, nay, unkindness to God, when we will provoke him thus, without any thing to tempt us to it. And therefore, though the commonness of this sin hath made it pass but for a small one, yet it is very far from being so, either in it self, or in God's account.

Necessity of abstaining from them. 9. Let all therefore, who are not yet fallen into the custom of this sin, be most careful never to yield to the least beginnnings of it; and for those, who are so miserable, as to be already ensnared in it, let them immediately, as they tender their souls, get out of it. And let no man plead the hardness of leaving an old custom, as an excuse for his continuing in it, but rather, the longer he hath been in it, so much the more haste let him make out of it, as thinking it too too much that he hath so long gone on in so great a sin. And if the length of the custom hath increased the difficulty of leaving it, that is in all reason to make him set immediately to the casting it off, lest that difficulty at last grow to an impossibility: And the harder he finds it at the present, so much the more diligent and watchful he must be in the use of all those *Means for it.* means, which may tend to the overcoming that sinful habit. Some few of those means it will not be amiss here to mention.

Sense of the Guilt and Danger. 10. First, Let him possess his mind fully of the heinousness of the sin, and not to measure it only according to the common rate of the world: And when he is fully persuaded of the Guilt, then let him add to that the consideration of the Danger; as, that it puts him out of God's favour at the present, and will, if he continue in it, cast him into hell for ever. And surely, if this were but throughly laid to heart, it would restrain this sin. For I would ask a man that pretends impossibility of leaving the custom, whether, if he were sure he should be hanged the next Oath he swore, the fear of it would not keep him from swearing? I can scarce believe any man in his wits so little master of himself, but it would. And then surely damning is so much worse than hanging, that, in all reason, the fear of that ought to be a much greater restraint. The doubt is, men do either not heartily believe that this sin will damn them, or if they do, they look on it as a thing a great way off, and so are not much moved with it; but both these are very unreasonable. For the first, it is certain, that every one that continues wilfully in any sin, is so long in a state of damnation; and therefore this being so continued in, must certainly put a man in that condition. For the second, It is very possible he may be deceived in thinking it so far off, for how knows any man that he shall not be struck dead with an Oath in his mouth? Or, if he were sure not to be so, yet eternal damnation is surely to be dreaded above all things, be it at what distance soever.

Truth in Speaking. 11. A second means is to be exactly true in all thou speakest, that all men may believe thee on thy bare word; and then thou wilt never have occasion to confirm it by an Oath, to make it more credible, which is the only colour or reason can at any time be pretended for Swearing.

Forsaking the Occasions. 12. Thirdly, Observe what it is that most betrays thee to this sin, whether drink, or anger, or the company and example of others, or whatever else; and then, if ever thou mean to forsake the sin, forsake those Occasions of it.

Reverence of God. 13. Fourthly, Endeavour to possess thy heart with a continual Reverence of God; and if that once grow into a custom with thee, it will quickly turn out that contrary one of profaning. Use and accustom thy self therefore to this Reverence of God, and particularly to such a respect to his Name, as, if it be possible, never to mention it without some lifting up of thy heart to him. Even in thy ordinary discourse, whenever thou takest his Name into thy mouth, let it be an occasion of raising up thy thoughts to him; but by no means permit thy self to use it in idle by-words, or the like. If thou dost accustom thy self to pay this Reverence to the bare mention of his Name, it will be an excellent fence against the profaning it in Oaths.

Watchfulness. 14. A fifth means is a diligent and constant Watch over thy self, that thou thus *offend not with thy tongue*, without which all the former will come to nothing. And the last *Prayer.* means is Prayer, which must be added to all thy endeavours; therefore pray earnestly, that God will enable thee to overcome this wicked custom; say with the Psalmist, *Set a watch, O Lord, over my mouth, and keep the door of my lips.* And if thou dost sincerely set thy self to the use of means for it, thou mayst be assured God will not be wanting in his assistance. I have been the longer on this, because it is so reigning a sin. God in his mercy give all that are guilty of it, a true sight of the heinousness of it.

What it is to honour God's Name. 15. By these several ways of dishonouring God's Name, you may understand what is the duty of honouring it, *viz.* a strict abstaining from every one of these, and that abstinence founded on an awful Respect and Reverence to that sacred Name, which

is great, wonderful, and holy, *Psal.* 99. 3. I have now past through the several branches of that great duty of Honouring of God.

SUNDAY V.

Of Worship due to God's Name. Of Prayer, and its several Parts. Of publick Prayers in the Church, in the Family. Of private Prayer. Of Repentance, &c. Of Fasting.

Sect. 1. THE Eighth Duty we owe to GOD, is WORSHIP: This is that great duty, by which especially we acknowledge his Godhead, Worship being proper only to God; and therefore it is to be lookt on as a most weighty duty. This is to be performed, first, by our souls; secondly, by our bodies; The soul's part is Praying. Now Prayer is a speaking to God, and there are divers parts of it, according to the different things about which we speak. *Worship. Prayer, its Parts.*

2. As first, There is Confession, that is, the acknowledging our sins to God. And this may be either general or particular: The general is, when we only confess in gross, that we are sinful; the particular, when we mention the several sorts and acts of our sins. The former is necessary to be always a part of our solemn prayers, whether publick or private. The latter is proper for private prayer, and there the oftner it is used the better; yea, even in our daily private prayer, it will be fit constantly to remember some of our greatest and foulest sins, though never so long since past. For such we should never think sufficiently confest and bewailed. And this bewailing must always go along with Confession; we must be heartily sorry for the sins we confess, and from our souls acknowledge our own great unworthiness in having committed them. For our Confession is not intended to instruct God, who knows our sins much better than our selves do, but it is to humble our selves; and therefore we must not think to have confest aright, till that be done. *Confession.*

3. The second part of prayer is Petition; that is, the begging of God whatsoever we want, either for our Souls or Bodies. For our Souls we must first beg pardon of sins, and that for the sake of Jesus Christ, who shed his blood to obtain it. Then we must also beg the grace and assistance of God's Spirit, to enable us to forsake our sins, and to walk in obedience to him. And herein it will be needful particularly to beg all these several Virtues, as Faith, Love, Zeal, Purity, Repentance, and the like, but especially those which thou most wantest: And therefore observe what thy wants are; and if thou beest proud, be most instant in praying for Humility; if lustful, for Chastity; and so for all other graces, according as thou findest thy needs. And in all these things that concern thy Soul, be very earnest and importunate; take no denial from God, nor give over, though thou do not presently obtain what thou suest for. But if thou hast never so long prayed for a grace, and yet findest it not, do not grow weary of praying, but rather search what the cause may be, which makes thy prayers so ineffectual; see if thou do not thy self hinder them: Perhaps thou prayest to God to enable thee to conquer some sin, and yet never goest about to fight against it, never makest any resistance, but yieldest to it as often as it comes, nay, puttest thy self in its way, in the road of all temptations. If it be thus, no wonder though thy prayers avail not, for thou wilt not let them. Therefore amend this, and set to the doing of thy part sincerely, and then thou needest not fear but God will do his. *Petition. For our Souls.*

4. Secondly, We are to petition also for our Bodies; that is, we are to ask of God such necessaries of life, as are needful for us while we live here. But these only in such a degree and measure, as his wisdom sees best for us. We must not presume to be our own carvers, and pray for all that wealth or greatness, which our own vain hearts may perhaps desire; but only for such a condition, in respect of outward things, as he sees may most tend to those great ends of our living here, the glorifying him, and the saving of our own souls. *Bodies.*

5. A third part of prayer is Deprecation, that is, when we pray to God to turn away some evil from us. Now the evil may be either the evil of Sin, or the evil of Punishment. The evil of Sin is that we are especially to pray against, most earnestly begging of God, that he will, by the power of his grace, preserve us from falling into Sin. And whatever sins they are, to which thou knowest thy self most inclined, there be *Deprecation. Of Sin.*

particularly

particularly earnest with God to preserve thee from them. This is to be done daily, but then more especially when we are under any present temptation, and in danger of falling into any Sin; in which case we have reason to cry out as St. Peter did, when he found himself sinking, *Save, Lord, or I perish;* humbly beseeching him either to withdraw the temptation, or strengthen us to withstand it, neither of which we can do for our selves.

Of Punishment. 6. Secondly, We are likewise to pray against the evil of Punishment, but principally against spiritual Punishments, as the anger of God, the withdrawing of his grace, and eternal damnation. Against these we can never pray with too much earnestness. But we may also pray against temporal Punishments, that is, any outward affliction; but this with submission to God's will, according to the example of Christ, *Matth.* 26. 39. *Not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Intercession. 7. A fourth part of prayer is Intercession, that is, praying for others. This in general we are to do for all mankind, as well strangers as acquaintance, but more particularly those, to whom we have any especial relation, either publick, as our Governours both in Church and State, or private, as parents, husbands, wife, children, friends, &c. We are also to pray for all that are in affliction, and such particular persons as we discern especially to be so. Yea, we are to pray for those that have done us injury, those *that despitefully use and persecute us;* for it is expresly the command of Christ, *Matth.* 5. 44. and that whereof he hath likewise given us the highest example, in praying even for his very crucifiers, *Luke* 23. 34. *Father, forgive them.* For all these sorts of persons we are to pray, and that for the very same good things we beg of God for our selves, that God would give them in their several places and callings, all spiritual and temporal blessings which he sees wanting to them, and turn away from them all evil, whether of Sin or Punishment.

Thanksgiving. 8. The fifth part of prayer is Thanksgiving, that is, the praising and blessing God for all his mercies, whether to our own persons, and those that immediately relate to us, or to the Church and Nation whereof we are members, or yet more general to all mankind; and this for all his mercies both spiritual and temporal. In the spiritual; first, for those wherein we are all in common concerned, as the giving of his Son, the sending of his Spirit, and all those means he hath used to bring sinful men unto himself: Then secondly, for those mercies we have in our own particulars received; such are, the having been born within the pale of the Church, and so brought up in the Christian Religion, by which we have been partakers of those precious advantages of the Word and Sacraments, and so have had, without any care or pains of ours, the means of eternal life put into our hands. But besides these, there is none of us, but have received other spiritual mercies from God.

Spiritual Mercies. 9. As first, God's patience and long-suffering, waiting for our repentance, and not cutting us off in our sins: Secondly, His calls and invitations of us to that repentance, not only outward, in the ministry of the Word, but also inward, by the motions of his Spirit. But then, if thou be one that hast by the help of God's grace, been wrought upon by these calls, and brought from a profane or worldly, to a Christian course of life, thou art surely in the highest degree tied to magnifie and praise his goodness, as having received from him the greatest of mercies.

Temporal. 10. We are likewise to give thanks for Temporal blessings, whether such as concern the publick, as the prosperity of the Church or Nation, and all remarkable deliverances afforded to either; or else such as concern our particular; such are all the good things of this life which we enjoy, as health, friends, food, raiment, and the like; also for those minute preservations, whereby we are by God's gracious providence kept from danger, and the especial deliverances which God hath given us in the time of greatest perils. It will be impossible to set down the several mercies, which every man receives from God, because they differ in kind and degree between one man and another. But it is sure, that he, who receives least, hath yet enough to employ his whole life in praises to God. And it will be very fit for every man to consider the several passages of his life, and the mercies he hath in each received, and so to gather a kind of list or catalogue of them, at least the principal of them, which he may always have in his memory, and often with a thankful heart repeat before God.

Publick Prayers in the Church. 11. These are the several parts of Prayer, and all of them to be used both publickly and privately. The Publick use of them is first, that in the Church, where all meet to join in those Prayers wherein they are in common concerned. And in this (where the Prayers are such as they ought to be) we should be very constant, there being an especial blessing promised to the joint requests of the faithful; and he that without a necessary cause absents himself from such Publick Prayers, cuts himself off from the Church,

which hath always been thought so unhappy a thing, that it is the greatest punishment the governours of the Church can lay upon the worst offender; and therefore it is a strange madness for men to inflict it upon them selves.

12. A second sort of publick Prayer is that in a Family, where all that are members of it join in their common supplications; and this also ought to be very carefully attended to, first, by the master of the Family, who is to look that there be such Prayers, it being as much his part thus to provide for the souls of his children and servants, as to provide food for their bodies. Therefore there is none, even the meanest housholder, but ought to take this care. If either himself, or any of his Family, can read, he may use some Prayers out of some good book; if it be the service Book of the Church, he makes a good choice: If they cannot read, it will then be necessary they should be taught without book some form of Prayer, which they may use in the Family; for which purpose again some of the Prayers of the Church will be very fit, as being most easy for their memories, by reason of their shortness, and yet containing a great deal of matter. But what choice soever they make of Prayers, let them be sure to have some; and let no man, that professes himself a Christian, keep so heathenish a Family, as not to see God be daily worshipped in it. But when the master of a Family hath done his duty in thus providing, it is the duty of every member of it to make use of that provision, by being constant and diligent at those Family Prayers. *In the Family.*

13. Private or secret Prayer is that which is used by a man alone, apart from all others, wherein we are to be more particular, according to our particular needs, than in publick it is fit to be. And this of private Prayer is a duty, which will not be excused by the performance of the other of publick. They are both required, and one must not be taken in exchange for the other. And whoever is diligent in publick Prayers, and yet negligent in private, it is much to be feared he rather seeks to approve himself to men than to God, contrary to the command of our Saviour, *Matt. 6.* who enjoins this private Prayer, this *praying to our Father in secret*, from whom alone we are to expect our reward, and not from the vain Praises of men. *Private Prayer.*

14. Now this duty of Prayer is to be often performed, by none seldomer than evening and morning, it being most necessary that we should thus begin and end all our works with God, and that not only in respect of the duty we owe him, but also in respect of our selves, who can never be either prosperous or safe, but by committing our selves to him, and therefore should tremble to venture on the perils either of day or night without his safeguard. How much oftner this duty is to be performed, must be judged according to the business or leisure men have; where, by business, I mean not such business as men unprofitably make to themselves, but the necessary business of a man's calling, which with some will not afford them much time for set and solemn Prayer. But even these men may often in a day lift up their hearts to God in some short Prayers, even whilst they are at their work. As for those that have more leisure, they are in all reason to bestow more time upon this duty. And let no man, that can find time to cast away upon his vanities, nay, perhaps, his sins, say he wants leisure for Prayer, but let him now endeavour to redeem what he hath mispent, by imploying more of that leisure in this duty for the future; and surely, if we did but rightly weigh how much it is to our own Advantage to perform this duty, we should think it wisdom to be as frequent as we are ordinarily seldom in it. *Frequency in Prayer.* *The Advantages of Prayer.*

15. For first, It is a great Honour for us poor worms of the earth, to be allowed to speak so freely to the Majesty of heaven. If a king should but vouchsafe to let one of his meanest subjects talk familiarly and freely with him, it would be looked on as a huge Honour; that man, how despicable soever he were before, would then be the envy of all his neighbours; and there is little question he would be willing to take all opportunities of receiving so great a grace. But, alas! this is nothing to the Honour is offered us, who are allowed, nay, invited, to speak to, and converse with the King of kings; and therefore how forward should we in all reason be to it? *Honour.*

16. Secondly, It is a great Benefit, even the greatest that can be imagined; for Prayer is the instrument of fetching down all good things to us, whether spiritual or temporal; no Prayer, that is qualified as it ought to be, but is sure to bring down a blessing, according to that of the wise man, *Ecclus.* 35. 17. *The Prayer of the humble pierceth the clouds, and will not turn away till the Highest regard it.* You would think him a happy man, that had one certain means of helping him to whatever he wanted, though it were to cost him much pains and labour: Now this happy man thou mayest be if thou wilt. Prayer is the never-failing means of bringing thee, if not all that thou thinkest thou wantest, yet all that indeed thou doest; that is, all that God sees fit *Benefits.*

for thee. And therefore, be there never so much weariness to thy flesh in the duty, yet considering in what continual want thou standest of something or other from God, it is a madness to let that uneasiness dishearten thee, and keep thee from this so sure means of supplying thy wants.

Pleasantness. 17. But in the third place, This duty is in it self so far from being uneasie, that it is very pleasant. God is the fountain of happiness, *and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore*, Psal 16. 11. And therefore the nearer we draw to him, the happier we must needs be, the very joys of heaven arising from our nearness to God. Now in this life we have no way of drawing so near to him, as by this of Prayer, and therefore, surely it is that, which in it self is apt to afford abundance of Delight and Pleasure: If it seem otherwise to us, it is from some distemper of our own hearts, which, like a sick palate, cannot relish the most pleasant meat. Prayer is a pleasant duty, but it is withal a spiritual one: And therefore, if thy heart be carnal, if that be set, either on the contrary pleasures of the flesh, or dross of the world, no marvel then if thou taste no Pleasantness in it; if, like the *Israelites*, thou despise Manna, whilst thou longest after the flesh-pots of *Egypt*. Therefore, if thou find a weariness in this duty, suspect thy self, purge and refine thy heart from the love of all sin, and endeavour to put it into a heavenly and spiritual frame, and then thou wilt find this no unpleasant exercise, but full of delight and satisfaction. In the mean time complain not of the hardness of the duty, but of the untowardness of thy own heart.

Carnality one reason of its seeming otherwise.

Want of Use, another. 18. But there may also be another reason of its seeming unpleasant to us, and that is want of Use. You know there are many things, which seem uneasie at the first trial, which yet, after we are accustomed to them, seem very delightful; and if this be thy case, then thou knowest a ready cure, *viz.* to use it ofiner; and so this consideration naturally enforces the exhortation of being frequent in this duty.

To ask nothing unlawful. 19. But we are not only to consider how often, but how well we perform it. Now to do it well, we are to respect, first, the matter of our Prayers, to look that we ask nothing that is unlawful; as revenge upon our enemies, or the like: Secondly, the manner; and that must be first in Faith; we must believe, that if we ask as we ought, God will either give us the thing we ask for, or else something which he sees better for us: And then, secondly, in Humility, we must acknowledge our selves utterly unworthy of any of those good things we beg for, and therefore sue for them only for Christ's sake: Thirdly, with Attention, we must mind what we are about, and not suffer our selves to be carried away to the thought of other things. I told you at the first, that Prayer was the business of the soul; but if our minds be wandring, it is the work only of the tongue and lips, which make it in God's account no better than vain babling, and so will never bring a blessing on us. Nay, as *Jacob* said to his mother, *Gen.* 27. 12. *It will be more likely to bring a curse on us than a blessing*; for it is a profaning one of the most solemn parts of God's service, it is a piece of hypocrisie, the *drawing near to him with our lips, when our hearts are far from him*, and a great slighting and despising that dreadful Majesty we come before; and as to our selves it is a most ridiculous folly, that we, who come to God upon such weighty errands, as are all the concernments of our souls and bodies, should in the midst forget our business, and pursue every the lightest thing that either our own vain fancies, or the devil, whose business it is here to hinder us, can offer to us. It is just as if a malefactor, that comes to sue for his life to the king, should in the midst of his supplication happen to espy a butter-fly, and then should leave his suit, and run a chace after that butter-fly: Would you not think it pity a pardon should be cast away upon so wretchless a creature? And sure it will be as unreasonable to expect, that God should attend and grant those suits of ours, which we do not at all consider our selves.

To ask in Faith.

In Humility.

With Attention.

Helps against Wandring. 20. This Wandring in Prayer, is a thing we are much concerned to arm our selves against, it being that to which we are naturally wonderfully prone. To that end it will be necessary, First, To possess our hearts at our coming to Prayers with the greatness of that Majesty we are to approach, that so we may dread to be vain and trifling in his presence: Secondly, We are to consider the great concernment of the things we are to ask; some whereof are such, that if we should not be heard, we were of all creatures the most miserable; and yet this Wandring is the way to keep us from being heard. Thirdly, We are to beg God's Aid in this particular: And therefore, when thou settest to Prayer, let thy first petition be for this grace of Attention.

Consideration of God's Majesty.

Our Needs.

Prayers for God's Aid.

Watchfulness. 21. Lastly, Be as watchful as is possible over thy heart in time of Prayer, to keep out all wandring thoughts, or, if any have gotten in, let them not find entertainment, but as soon as ever thou discernest them, suffer them not to abide one moment, but cast them out with indignation, and beg God's pardon for them. And if thou dost

thus

thus sincerely and diligently strive against them, either God will enable thee in some measure to overcome, or he will in his mercy pardon thee what thou canst not prevent: But if it be through thy own negligence, thou art to expect neither, so long as that negligence continues.

22. In the fourth place, We must look our Prayers be with Zeal and Earnestness; it is not enough that we so far attend them, as barely to know what it is we say; but we must put forth all the affection and devotion of our souls, and that according to the several parts of Prayer before mentioned. It is not the cold faint request that will ever obtain from God; we see it will not from our selves: For if a beggar should ask relief from us, and do it in such a scornful manner, that he seem'd indifferent whether he had it or no, we should think he had either little want, or great pride, and so have no heart to give him. Now surely the things we ask from God, are so much above the rate of an ordinary alms, that we can never expect they should be given to slight and heartless petitions. No more in like manner will our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving ever be accepted by him, if it be not offered from a heart truly affected with the sense of his mercies: It's but a kind of formal complementing, which will never be approved by him, who requires the heart, and not the lips only. And the like may be said of all the other parts of Prayer. Therefore be careful, when thou drawest nigh to God in Prayer, to raise up thy soul to the highest pitch of Zeal and Earnestness thou art able. And because, of thy self alone, thou art not able to do any thing, beseech God, that he will enflame thy heart with this heavenly fire of devotion, and when thou hast obtained it, beware that thou neither quench it by any wilful sin, nor let it go out again for want of stirring it up and employing it. *With Zeal.*

23. Fifthly, We must pray with Purity, I mean, we must purge our hearts from all affections to sin. This is surely the meaning of the Apostle, 1 *Tim.* 2. 8. when he commands men to *lift up holy hands in Prayer*; and he there instances in one special sort of sin, wrath and doubting, where by doubting is meant those unkind disputes and contentions which are so common amongst men. And surely he that cherishes that, or any other sin in his heart, can never lift up those holy hands, which are required in this duty. And then sure his Prayers, be they never so many or earnest, will little avail him. The Psalmist will tell him, he shall not be heard, *Psal.* 66. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* Nay, *Solomon* will tell him yet worse, that his Prayers are not only vain, but abominable. *Prov.* 15. 8. *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.* And thus to have our Prayers turned into sin, is one of the heaviest things that can befal any man. We see it is set down in that sad catalogue of curses, *Psalm* 109. 7. therefore let us not be so cruel to our selves, as to pull it upon our own heads, which we certainly do, if we offer up Prayers from an impure heart. *With Purity.*

24. In the last place, we must direct our Prayers to right Ends; and that either in respect of the Prayer it self, or the things we pray for: First, we must pray not to gain the praise of devotion amongst men, like those hypocrites, *Matt.* 6. 5. nor yet only for company or fashion sake, to do as others do: But we must do it, first, as an act of worship to God; secondly, as an acknowledgment that he is that great spring from whence alone we expect all good things; and thirdly, to gain a supply of our own or others needs. Then, in respect of the things prayed for, we must be sure to have no ill aims upon them; we must not ask that we *may consume it upon our lusts*, *James* 4. 3. as those do, who pray for wealth, that they may live in riot and excess; and for power, that they may be able to mischief their enemies, and the like. But our end in all must be God's glory first; and next that, our own and others salvation, and all other things must be taken in only as they tend to those, which they can never do, if we abuse them to sin. I have now done with that first part of worship, that of the Soul. *To right ends.*

25. The other is that of the Body; and that is nothing else but such humble and reverent gestures in our approaches to God, as may both express the inward reverence of our souls, and may also pay him some tribute from our very Bodies, with which the Apostle commands us to glorifie God, as well as with our souls: And good reason, since he hath created and redeemed the one as well as the other: Whensoever therefore thou offerest thy Prayers unto God, let it be with all lowliness, as well of Body as of mind, according to that of the Psalmist, *Psalm* 95. 6. *O come let us worship, let us fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker.* *Bodily Worship.*

26. The ninth Duty to God is REPENTANCE: That this is a duty to God, we are taught by the Apostle, *Acts* 20. 21. where speaking of Repentance, he stiles it *Repentance towards God.* And there is good reason this should be a duty to him, since there is no sin we commit, but is either mediately or immediately against him. For *Repentance.*

though there be sins both against our selves and our neighbours, yet they being forbidden by God, they are also breaches of his commandments, and so sins against him.

A turning from Sin to God. This Repentance is, in short, nothing but a turning from Sin to God, the casting off all our former evils, and instead thereof, constantly practising all those Christian duties which God requireth of us. And this is so necessary a duty, that without it we certainly perish: We have Christ's word for it, *Luke* 13. 5. *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

27. The directions for performing the several parts of this duty, have been already given in the preparation to the Lord's Supper, and thither I refer the reader. Only I shall here mind him, that it is not to be lookt upon as a duty, to be practised only at the time of receiving the Sacrament. For this being the only remedy against the poison of sin, we must renew it as often as we repeat our sins, that is, daily. I mean, we must every day repent of the sins of that day. For what Christ saith of other evils, is true also of this, *Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.* We have sins enough of each day to exercise a daily Repentance, and therefore every man must thus daily call himself to account.

Times for this Duty.

Daily.

At set times. 28. But as it is in accounts, they who constantly set down their daily expences, have yet some set Time of casting up the whole sum, as at the end of the week or month; so should it also be here, we should set aside some Time to humble our selves solemnly before God for the sins, not of that day only, but of our whole lives. And the frequenter these Times are, the better. For the oftner we thus cast up our accounts with God, and see what vast debts we are run in to him, the more humbly shall we think of our selves, and the more shall thirst after his mercy, which two are the special things that must qualifie us for his pardon. He therefore that can assign him self one day in the week for this purpose, will take a thriving course for his soul. Or, if any man's state of life be so busie, as not to afford him to do it so often, let him yet come as near to that frequency as is possible for him, remembring always, that none of his worldly employments can bring him in near so gainful a return, as this spiritual one will do; and therefore it is very ill husbandry to pursue them, to the neglect of this.

In the time of Affliction. 29. Besides these constant Times, there are likewise occasional times for the performance of this duty; such especially are the Times of Calamity and Affliction; for when any such befal us, we are to look on it as a message sent from heaven to call us to this duty, and therefore must never neglect it, when we are thus summoned to it, lest we be of the number of them, who *despise the chastisements of the Lord*, Heb. 12. 5.

At Death. 30. There is yet another time of Repentance, which in the practice of men hath gotten away the custom from all those, and that is, the time of Death; which, it is true, is a time very fit to renew our Repentance, but sure not proper to begin it: And it is a most desperate madness for men to defer it till then. For, to say the mildest of it, it is the venturing our souls upon such miserable uncertainties, as no wise man would trust with any thing of the least value.

The Danger of deferring it till then. For first, I would ask any man that means to repent at his Death, How he knows he shall have an hour's time for it? Do we not daily see men snatcht away in a moment? And who can tell that it shall not be his own case? But secondly, suppose he have a more leisurely Death, that some disease give him warning of its approach, yet perhaps he will not understand that warning, but will still flatter himself, as very often sick people do, with hopes of life to the last; and so his Death may be sudden to him, though it comes by never so slow degrees. But again, thirdly, if he do discern his Danger, yet how is he sure he shall then be able to repent? Repentance is a grace of God not at our command; and it is just and usual with God, when men have a long time refused and rejected that grace, resisted all his calls and invitations to conversion and amendment, to give them over at last to the hardness of their own hearts, and not to afford them any more of that grace they have so despised. Yet suppose, in the fourth place, that God in his infinite patience should still continue the offer of that grace to thee, yet thou that hast resisted, it may be thirty, or forty, or fifty years together, how knowest thou that thou shalt put off that habit of resistance upon a sudden, and make use of the grace afforded? It is sure thou hast many more advantages towards the doing it now, than thou wilt have then.

The Disadvantages of a Death-bed Repentance.

The Custom of Sin. 31. For first, The longer Sin hath kept possession of the heart, the harder it will be to drive it out. It is true, if Repentance were nothing but a present ceasing from the acts of sin, the Death-bed were fittest for it; for then we are disabled from committing most Sins: But I have formerly shewed you, Repentance contains much more than so; there must be in it a sincere hatred of Sin, and love of God. Now how unlikely is it,

that he which hath all his life loved Sin, cherished it in his bosom, and, on the contrary, abhorred God and goodness, should, in an instant, quite change his affections, hate that Sin he loved, and love God and goodness, which he before utterly hated?

32. And secondly, The bodily Pains that attend a death-bed will distract thee, and make thee unable to attend the work of Repentance; which is a business of such weight and difficulty, as will employ all our powers, even when they are at the freshest. *Bodily Pains.*

33. Consider those disadvantages thou must then struggle with, and then tell me what hope there is thou shalt then do that, which now upon much easier terms thou wilt not. But in the third place, there is a Danger behind beyond all these, and that is, that the Repentance, which death drives a man to, will not be a true Repentance; for in such a case, it is plain, it is only the fear of hell puts him on it; which, though it may be a good beginning, where there is time after to perfect it, yet where it goes alone, it can never avail for salvation. Now that death-bed Repentances are often only of this sort is too likely, when it is observed that many men, who have seemed to repent, when they have thought death approaching, have yet, after it hath pleased God to restore them to health, been as wicked (perhaps worse) as ever they were before; which shews plainly, that there was no real change in them, and then surely, had such a man died in that seeming Repentance, God, *who tries the heart*, would not have accepted it, which he saw was unsincere. When all these dangers are laid together, it will surely appear a most desperate adventure, for any man to trust to a death-bed Repentance: Nor is it ever the less for that example of the penitent thief, *Luke* 23. 43. which is by many so much depended on. For it is sure his case and ours differ widely; he had never heard of Christ before, and so more could not be expected of him, than to embrace him as soon as he was tendred to him: But we have had him offered, nay, pressed upon us from our cradles, and yet have rejected him. But if there were not this difference, it is but a faint hope can be raised only from a single example, and another we find not in the whole Bible. The *Israelites*, we read, *were fed with Manna from heaven*; but would you not think him stark mad, that should, out of expectation of the like, neglect to provide him self any food? Yet it is full as reasonable to depend upon this example as the other. I conclude all in the words of the wise man, *Eccles*. 12. 1. *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come.* *Danger of Unsincerity.*

34. To this duty of Repentance, Fasting is very proper to be annexed: The Scripture usually joins them together: Among the *Jews*, the great day of Atonement was to be kept with Fasting, as you may see by comparing *Levit*. 16. 31. with *Isaiah* 58. 5. and this by God's especial appointment. And in the Prophets, when the people are called on to repent and humble them selves, they are also called on to fast. Thus it is, *Joel* 2. 12. *Therefore now thus saith the Lord, Turn ye unto me with all your heart, with fasting, and with weeping*, &c. Yea, so proper hath Fasting been accounted to humiliation, that we see even wicked *Ahab* would not omit it in his, 1 *Kings* 21. 27. nor the Heathen *Ninevites* in theirs, *Jon*. 3. 5. Nor is it less fit, or less acceptable since Christ, than it was before him. For we see, he supposes it as a duty sometimes to be performed, when he gives directions to avoid vain-glory in it, *Matt*. 6. 6. and also assures us, that if it be perform'd as it ought, not to please men, but God, it will surely be rewarded by him. And accordingly we find it practised by the Saints: *Anna* (Luke 2. 37.) *served God with Fasting and Prayer*: Where it is observable, that it is reckoned as a service of God, fit to be joined with prayers. And the Christians of the first times were generally very frequent in the practice of it. Now, though Fasting be especially proper to a time of humiliation, yet is it not so restrained to it, but it may be seasonable whensoever we have any extraordinary thing to request from God. Thus, when *Esther* was to endeavour the deliverance of her people from destruction, she and all the *Jews* kept a solemn Fast, *Esth*. 4. 16. And thus, when *Paul* and *Barnabas* were to be ordained Apostles, there was Fasting joined to prayer, *Acts* 13. 3. And so it will be very fit for us, whensoever we have need of any extraordinary directions or assistance from God, whether concerning our temporal or spiritual concernments, thus to quicken our prayers by Fasting. But above all occasions, this of humiliation seems most to require it; for besides the advantages of kindling our zeal, which is never more necessary than when we beg for pardon of sins, Fasting carries in it somewhat of Revenge, which is reckoned as a special part of repentance, 2 *Cor*. 7. 11. For, by denying our bodies the refreshment of our ordinary food, we do inflict somewhat of punishment upon our selves for our former excesses, or whatever other sins we at that time accuse our selves of; which is a proper effect of that indignation which every sinner ought to have against himself. And truly he that is so tender of himself, *Fasting.* *Fasting, a Revenge upon our selves.*

that

that he can never find in his heart so much as to miss a meal, by way of Punishment for his faults, shews he is not much fallen out with him self for committing them, and so wants that indignation which the Apostle in the fore-named texts mentions as a part of true repentance.

Such Revenges acceptable with God; yet no Satisfaction for sins. 35. There is no doubt, but such holy Revenges upon our selves for sins, are very acceptable to God; yet we must not think, that either those, or any thing else we can do, can make Satisfaction for our offences; for that nothing but the blood of Christ can do: And therefore on that, and not on any of our performances, we must depend for pardon. Yet since that blood shall never be applied to any but penitent sinners, we are as much concerned to bring forth all the fruits of repentance, as if our hopes depended on them only.

Times of Fasting. 36. How often this duty of Fasting is to be performed, we have no direction in Scripture. That must be allotted by mens own piety, according as their health or other considerations will allow. But, as it is in humiliation, the frequenter returns we have of set Times for it, the better, so it is likewise in Fasting, the oftner the better, so it be not hurtful either to our healths, or to some other duty required of us. Nay, perhaps, Fasting may help some men to more of those times for humiliation, than they would otherwise gain. For, perhaps, there are some, who cannot, without a manifest hindrance to their calling, allow a whole day to that work, yet such an one may at least afford that time he would otherwise spend in eating; and so Fasting will be doubly useful towards such a man's humiliation, both by helping him in the duty, and gaining him time for it.

Second Branch of our Duty to God. 37. I have now gone through the first Branch of our duty to God, to wit, the acknowledging him for our God. The second is, the having no other. Of which I need say little, as it is a forbidding of that grosser sort of Heathenish idolatry, the worshipping of idols, which though it were once common in the world, yet is now so rare, that it is not likely any that shall read this, will be concern'd in it. Only I must say, that to pay divine worship to any Creature, be it Saint or Angel, yea, or the image of Christ him self, is a transgression against this second Branch of our duty to God; it being the imparting that to a creature, which is due only to God, and therefore is strictly to be abstained from.

Inward Idolatry. 38. But there is another sort of Idolatry, of which we are generally guilty, and that is, when we pay those affections of love, fear, trust, and the like, to any creature, in a higher degree than we do to God: For that is the setting up that thing, whatsoever it is, for our God. And this inward kind of Idolatry, is that which provokes God to jealousie, as well as the outward of worshipping an idol. I might enlarge much upon this; but because some severals of it have been toucht on in the former discourse, I suppose it needless; and therefore shall now proceed to the second head of DUTY, that to our *SELVES*.

SUNDAY VI.

Duty to our Selves; of Sobriety; of Humility; the great Sin of Pride; of Vain-glory, the Danger, Folly; the Means to prevent it; of Meekness, &c.

Duty to our selves. Sect. 1. THIS Duty to our Selves is by St. *Paul*, in the forementioned text, *Tit.* 2. 12. summed up in this one word, *Soberly*. Now by *Soberly*, is meant our keeping within those due bounds which God hath set us. My business will therefore be, to tell you what are the particulars of this Sobriety: And that first, in respect of the Soul; secondly, in respect of the Body. The sobriety of the Soul stands in right governing its passions and affections; and to that are many virtues required. I shall give you the particulars of them.

Humility. 2. The first of them is Humility, which may well have the prime place, not only in respect of the excellency of the virtue, but also of its usefulness towards the obtaining of all the rest: This being the foundation, on which all others must be built. And he that hopes to gain them without this, will prove but like that foolish Builder Christ speaks of, *Luke* 6. 49. *who built his house on the sand.* Of the Humility towards God I have already spoken, and shewed the necessity of it. I am now

to speak of Humility, as it concerns our selves, which will be found no less necessary than the former.

3. This Humility is of two sorts; the first is, the having a mean and low opinion of our selves; the second is, the being content that others should have so of us. The first of these is contrary to pride, the other to vain-glory. And that both these are absolutely necessary to Christians, I am now to shew you; which will, I conceive, best be done by laying before you, first, the sin; secondly, the danger; thirdly, the folly of the contrary vices.

The great Sin of Pride.

4. And first, for Pride; the Sin of it is so great, that it cast the Angels out of heaven; and therefore, if we may judge of Sin by the punishment, it was not only the first, but the greatest Sin that ever the Devil himself hath been guilty of: But we need no better proof of the heinousness of it, than the extreme hatefulness of it to God; which, besides that instance of his punishing the Devil, we may frequently find in the Scriptures, *Prov.* 16. 5. *Every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord.* And again, *Chap.* 6. 17. where there is mention of several things the Lord hates; A proud look is set as the first of them. So *James* 4. 6. *God resisteth the proud;* and divers other texts there are to the same purpose, which shews the great hatred God bears to this Sin of Pride. Now, since it is certain, God, who is all goodness, hates nothing, but as it is evil, it must needs follow, that where God hates in so great a degree, there must be a great degree of evil.

The Danger of drawing into other Sins.

5. But secondly, *Pride* is not only very sinful, but very dangerous; and that first, in respect of drawing us to other Sins; secondly, of betraying us to punishments. First, Pride draws us to other Sins, wherein it shews it self indeed to be the direct contrary to Humility: For, as that is the root of all virtue, so is this of all vice. For he that is proud, sets himself up as his own God, and so can never submit himself to any other rules or laws, than what he makes to himself. *The ungodly*, says the Psalmist, *is so proud, that he careth not for God*, Psal. 10. 4. where you see it is his Pride that makes him despise God. And when a man is once come to that, he is prepared for the commission of all Sins. I might instance in a multitude of particular Sins, that naturally flow from this of Pride; as first, anger, which the wise man sets as the effect of Pride, *Prov.* 21. 24. calling it *proud wrath;* secondly, strife and contention, which he again notes to be the off-spring of Pride, *Prov.* 30. 33. *Only by Pride cometh contention.* And both these are indeed most natural effects of Pride: For he that thinks very highly of himself, expects much submission and observance from others; and therefore cannot but rage and quarrel, whenever he thinks it not sufficiently paid. It would be infinite to mention all the fruits of this bitter root: I shall name but one more, and that is, that Pride not only betrays us to many Sins, but also makes them incurable in us; for it hinders the working of all remedies.

Frustrating of Remedies.

6. Those Remedies must either come from God or man; if from God, they must be either in the way of meekness and gentleness, or else of sharpness and punishment. Now, if God by his goodness essay to lead a proud man to repentance, he quite mistakes God's meaning, and thinks all the mercies he receives, are but the reward of his own desert; and so long, 'tis sure, he will never think he needs repentance. But if, on the other side, God use him more sharply, and lay afflictions and punishments upon him, these in a proud heart work nothing but murmurings and hating of God, as if he did him injury in those punishments. As for the remedies that can be used by man, they again must be either by way of correction or exhortation: Corrections from man will sure never work more on a proud heart, than those from God; for he that can think God unjust in them, will much rather believe it of man: And exhortations will do as little; for let a proud man be admonished, though never so mildly and lovingly, he looks on it as a disgrace: And therefore, instead of confessing or amending the fault, he falls to reproaching his reprover, as an over-busy or censorious person; and for that greatest and most precious act of kindness, looks on him as his enemy. And now one that thus stubbornly resists all means of cure, must be concluded in a most dangerous estate.

Betraying to Punishment.

7. But besides this danger of sin, I told you there was another, that of Punishment; and of this there will need little proof, when it is consider'd, that God is the proud man's profest enemy, that he hates and resists him, as appeared in the texts fore-cited: And then there can be little doubt, that he, which hath so mighty an adversary, shall be sure to smart for it. Yet besides this general ground of conclusion, it may not be amiss to mention some of those texts, which particularly threaten this sin, as *Prov.* 16. 18. *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall:* Again, *Prov.* 16. 5. *Every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord: Though hand join in hand,*

hand, he shall not be unpunished. The decree it seems is unalterable, and whatever endeavours are used to preserve the proud man, they are but vain; for he *shall not go unpunished.* And this is very remarkable in the story of *Nebuchadnezzar*, Dan. 4. who, though a king, the greatest in the world, yet for his Pride was driven from among men to dwell and feed with beasts. And it is most frequently seen, that this Sin meets with very extraordinary judgments, even in this life. But if it should not, let not the proud man think that he hath escaped God's vengeance, for it is sure there will be a most sad reckoning in the next; for, if God spared not the Angels for this sin, but cast them into hell, let no man hope to speed better.

The Folly. 8. In the third place I am to shew you the great Folly of this Sin; and to do that, it will be necessary to consider the several things whereof men use to be proud: They are of three sorts, either those which we call the goods of nature, or the goods of fortune, or the goods of grace.

In respect of the Goods of Nature. 9. By the Goods of Nature, I mean beauty, strength, wit, and the like; and the being proud of any of these is a huge Folly. For first, we are very apt to mistake, and think our selves handsome or witty, when we are not; and then there cannot be a more ridiculous Folly, than to be proud of what we have not; and such every one esteems it in another man, though he never supposes it his own case, and so never discerns it in himself. And therefore there is nothing more despicable amongst all men, than a proud fool: Yet no man, that entertains high opinions of his own wit, but is in danger to be thus deceived; a man's own judgment of himself being, of all others, the least to be trusted. But secondly, suppose we be not out in judging, yet what is there in any of these natural endowments, which is worth the being proud of, there being scarce any of them, which some creature or other hath not in a greater degree than man? How much does the whiteness of the lily, and the redness of the rose, exceed the white and red of the fairest face? What a multitude of creatures is there, that far surpass man in strength and swiftness? And divers others there are, which, as far as concerns any useful end of theirs, act much more wisely than most of us; and are therefore oftentimes in Scripture proposed to us by way of example. It is therefore surely great unreasonableness for us to think highly of our selves, for such things as are common to us with beasts and plants. But thirdly, if they were as excellent as we fancy them, yet they are not at all durable, they are impaired and lost by sundry means; a frenzy will destroy the rarest wit; a sickness decay the freshest beauty, the greatest strength; or however, old age will be sure to do all: And therefore to be proud of them, is again a Folly in this respect. But lastly, whatever they are, we gave them not to our selves. No man can think he did any thing towards the procuring his natural beauty or wit; and so can with no reason value himself for them.

The Goods of Fortune. 10. In the second place, the Folly is as great to be proud of the Goods of Fortune: By them I mean wealth and honour, and the like; for it is sure they add nothing of true worth to the man; somewhat of outward pomp and bravery they may help him to, but that makes no change in the person. You may load an ass with money, or deck him with rich trappings, yet still you will not make him a whit the nobler kind of beast by either of them. Then, secondly, these are things we have no hold of, they vanish many times e'er we are aware: He that is rich to day, may be poor to morrow, and then will be the less pitied by all in his poverty, the prouder he was when he was rich. Thirdly, we have them all but as stewards to lay out for our Master's use; and therefore, should rather think how to make up our accounts, than pride our selves in our receipts. Lastly, whatever of these we have, they, as well as the former, are not owing to our selves. But, if they be lawfully gotten, we owe them only to God, whose blessing it is that maketh rich, *Prov.* 10. 22. if unlawfully, we have them upon such terms, that we have very little reason to brag of them. And thus you see in these several respects, the Folly of this second sort of pride.

The Goods of Grace. 11. The third is that of the Goods of Grace; that is, any virtue a man hath. And here I cannot say, but the things are very valuable, they being infinitely more precious than all the world; yet nevertheless, this is of all the rest the highest Folly: And that not only in the foregoing respect, that we help not our selves to it, Grace being above all things most immediately God's work in us, but especially in this, that the being proud of Grace is the sure way to lose it. God, who gives Grace to the humble, will take it from the proud: For if, as we see in the parable, *Matt.* 25. 28. the talent was taken from him who had only put it to no use at all, how shall he hope to have it continued to him that hath put it to so ill, that instead of trading with it for God, hath trafficked with it for Satan? And as he will lose the Grace for the future, so he will lose all the reward of it for the time past. For, let a man have done never so many

good acts, yet if he be proud of them, that Pride will be charged on him to his destruction; but the good shall never be remembered to his reward. And this proves it to be a most wretched Folly to be proud of Grace: It is like that of children, that pull those things in pieces they are most fond of, but yet much worse than that of theirs; for we not only lose the thing, (and that the most precious that can be imagined) but we must also be eternally punished for doing so, there being nothing that shall be so sadly reckoned for in the next world, as the abuse of Grace: And certainly there can be no greater abuse of it, than to make it serve for an end so directly contrary to that for which it was given, it being given to make us humble, not proud, to magnifie God, not our selves.

Means of Humility.

12. Having shewed you thus much of this sin, I suppose it will appear very necessary to be eschewed; to which purpose it will first, be useful to consider what hath been already said concerning it, and that so seriously, as may work in thee, not some slight dislike, but a deep and irreconcileable hatred of the sin: Secondly, to be very watchful over thine own heart, that it cherish not any beginnings of it: Never suffer it to feed on the fancy of thy own worth, but whenever any such thought arises, beat it down immediately with the remembrance of some of thy follies or sins, and so make this very motion of Pride an occasion of Humility: Thirdly, never to compare thy self with those thou thinkest more foolish or wicked than thy self, that so thou mayst, like the *Pharisee*, Luke 16. 11. extol thy self for being better; but if thou wilt compare, do it with the wise and godly; and then thou wilt find thou comest so far short, as may help to pull down thy high esteem of thy self: Lastly, to be very earnest in prayer, that God would root out all degrees of this sin in thee, and make thee one of those *poor in spirit*, Matt. 5. 3. to whom the blessing even of heaven it self is promised.

Vain-glory. The Sin.

13. The second contrary to Humility, I told you, was Vain-glory; that is, a great thirst after the praise of men. And first, that this is a Sin, I need prove no otherwise, than by the words of our Saviour, *John* 5. 44. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?* Where it appears that it is not only a Sin, but such an one as hinders the receiving of Christ into the heart; for so Believing there signifies. This then, in the second place, shews you likewise the great dangerousness of this sin; for, if it be that which keeps Christ out of the heart, it is sure it brings infinite Danger, since all our safety, all our hope of escaping the wrath to come, stands in receiving him. But besides the authority of this text, common experience shews, that wherever this sin hath possession, it endangers men to fall into many other. For he that so considers the praise of men, that he must at no hand part with it, whenever the greatest sins come to be in fashion and credit, (as God knows many are now a-days) he will be sure to commit them, rather than run the disgrace of being too single and precise. I doubt there are many consciences can witness the truth of this, so that I need say no more to prove the Danger of this sin.

The Danger.

The Folly.

14. The third thing I am to shew is the Folly of it; and that will appear, first, by considering what it is we thus hunt after, nothing but a little air, a blast, the breath of men: It brings us in nothing of real advantage; for I am made never the wiser nor the better for a man's saying, I am wise and good. Besides, if I am commended, it must be either before my face, or behind my back; if the former, it is very often flattery, and so the greatest abuse that can be offered; and then I must be very much a fool to be pleased with it: But if it be behind my back, I have not then so much as the pleasure of knowing it; and therefore it is a strange Folly thus to pursue what is so utterly gainless. But secondly, it is not only gainless, but painful and uneasy also. He that eagerly seeks praise, is not at all master of himself, but must suit all his actions to that end, and instead of doing what his own reason and conscience, (nay, perhaps his worldly conveniency) directs him to, he must take care to do what will bring him in commendations, and so enslave himself to every one that hath but a tongue to commend him. Nay, there is yet a further uneasiness in it, and that is, when such a man fails of his aim, when he misses the praise, and perhaps meets with the contrary, reproach; (which is no man's lot more often than the vain-glorious, nothing making a man more despised:) Then what disturbances and disquiets, and even tortures of mind is he under? A lively instance of this you have in *Abithophel*, 2 Sam. 17. 23. who had so much of this upon *Absalom*'s despising his counsel, that he chose to rid himself of it by hanging himself. And sure this painfulness, that thus attends this sin, is sufficient proof of the Folly of it. Yet this is not all, it is yet further very hurtful; for if this Vain-glory be concerning any good or Christian action, it destroys all the fruit of it: He that prays, or gives alms to be seen of men, *Matt.* 6. 2. must take that as his

reward, *Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward;* they must expect none from God, but the portion of those hypocrites, *that love the praise of men more than the praise of God.* And this is a miserable Folly to make such an exchange: It is like the dog in the fable, who seeing in the water the shadow of that meat he held in his mouth, catcht at the shadow, and so let go his meat. Such dogs, such unreasonable creatures are we, when we thus let go the eternal rewards of heaven, to catch at a few good words of men. And yet we do not only lose those eternal joys, but procure to our selves the contrary, eternal miseries, which is sure the highest pitch of folly and madness. But if the Vain-glory be not concerning any virtuous action, but only some indifferent thing, yet even there also it is very hurtful; for Vain-glory is a sin that, wheresoever it is placed, endangers our eternal estate, which is the greatest of all mischiefs: And even for the present it is observable, that of all other sins it stands the most in its own light, hinders it self of that very thing it pursues: For there are very few that thus hunt after praise, but they are discerned to do so, and that is sure to eclipse whatever praise-worthy thing they do, and brings scorn upon them instead of reputation. And then certainly we may justly condemn this sin of Folly, which is so ill a manager even of its own design.

Helps against Vain-glory. 15. You have seen how wretched a thing this Vain-glory is in these several respects, the serious consideration whereof may be one good means to subdue it; to which it will be necessary to add, first, a great watchfulness over thy self; observe narrowly whether in any Christian duty thou at all considerest the praise of men, or even in the most indifferent action, look whether thou have not too eager a desire of it; and if thou findest thy self inclined that way, have a very strict eye upon it, and wherever thou findest it stirring, check and resist it, suffer it not to be the end of thy actions: But in all matters of Religion, let thy duty be the motive; in all indifferent things of common life, let reason direct thee; and, though thou mayst so far consider in those things the opinion of men, as to observe the rules of common decency, yet never think any praise, that comes in to thee from any thing of that kind, worth the contriving for. Secondly, Set up to thy self another aim, *viz.* that of pleasing God: Let that be thy enquiry, when thou goest about any thing, whether it be approved by him; and then thou wilt not be at leisure to consider what praise it will bring thee from men. And surely he that weighs of how much more moment it is to please God, who is able eternally to reward us, than man, whose applause can never do us any good, will surely think it reasonable to make the former his only care. Thirdly, If at any time thou art praised, do not be much overjoyed with it, nor think a jot the better of thy self; but if it be virtue thou art praised for, remember it was God that wrought it in thee, and give him the glory, never thinking any part of it belongs to thee: If it be some indifferent action, then remember that it cannot deserve praise, as having no goodness in it: But if it be a bad one, (as amongst men such are sometimes likeliest to be commended) then it ought to set thee a trembling instead of rejoycing, for then that wo of our Saviour's belongs to thee, *Luke 6. 26. Wo unto you when men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.* And there is not a greater sign of a hardned heart, than when men can make their sins the matter of their glory. In the last place, let thy prayers assist in the fight with this corruption.

Meekness. 16. A second VIRTUE is MEEKNESS, that is, a calmness and quietness of spirit, contrary to the rages and impatiences of anger. This Virtue may be exercised, either in respect to God or our neighbour: That towards God I have already spoken of under the head of humility, and that towards our neighbour I shall hereafter. All I have here to say of it is, how it becomes a duty to our selves; that it does, in respect

Advantage. of the great Advantage we reap by it, which in mere kindness to our selves we are to look after. And to prove that it brings us this great Advantage, I need say no more, but that this Meekness is that to which God hath pronounced a blessing, *Matth.* 5. 5. *Blessed are the meek,* and not only in the next world, but even in this too, *They shall inherit the earth.* Indeed none but the meek person hath the true enjoyment of any thing in the world; for the angry and impatient are like sick people, who, we use to say, cannot enjoy the greatest prosperities: For, let things be never so fair without, they will raise storms within their own breasts. And surely whoever hath, either in himself, or others, observed the great uneasiness of this passion of anger, cannot choose but think Meekness a most pleasant thing.

17. Besides, it is also a most honourable thing, for it is that whereby we resemble Christ, *Learn of me,* saith he, *for I am meek and lowly in heart,* Matt. 11. 29. it is also that whereby we conquer our selves, overcome our own unruly passions, which of all victories is the greatest and most noble. Lastly, it is that which makes us behave

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our selves like men, whereas anger gives us the fierceness and wildness of savage beasts. And accordingly the one is by all esteemed and loved, whereas the other is hated and abhorred, every man shunning a man in rage as they would a furious beast.

18. Farther yet, Meekness is the sobriety of the mind, whereas anger is the direct madness; it puts a man wholly out of his own power, and makes him do such things, as himself in his sober temper abhors. How many men have done those things in their rage, which they have repented all their lives after? And therefore surely, as much as a man is more honourable than a beast, a sober man than a madman, so much hath this virtue of Meekness the advantage of honour, above the contrary vice of anger.

19. Again, Meekness makes any condition tolerable and easy to be endured. He that meekly bears any suffering, takes off the edge of it, that it cannot wound him; whereas he that frets and rages at it, whets it, and makes it much sharper than it would be; nay, in some cases makes that so, which would not else be so at all: As particularly in the case of reproachful words, which in themselves can do us no harm, they neither hurt our bodies, nor lessen our estates; the only mischief they can do us, is to make us angry, and then our anger may do us many more: Whereas he that meekly passes them by, is never the worse for them, nay, the better; for he shall be rewarded by God for that patience. Much more might be said to recommend this Virtue to us, in respect of our own present advantage, but I suppose this may suffice to persuade men to esteem of it. The harder matter will be to gain them to the practice of it, wherein men pretend I know not what difficulties of natural constitutions, and the like; yet sure there is no man of so cholerick a temper, but if he did heartily set about it, would find it were not impossible in some good measure to subdue it; but then he must be diligent in using means to that end. Divers of these means there are; I shall mention some few.

Means of obtaining it.

20. As first, The imprinting deep in our minds the loveliness and benefits of Meekness, together with the ugliness and mischiefs of anger. Secondly, to set before us the example of Christ, who endured all reproaches, yea, torments, with perfect patience, that was *led as a sheep to the slaughter*, Isaiah 53. 7. *That when he was reviled, revi-led not again, when he suffered, threatned not;* 1 Pet. 2. 23. And if he, the Lord of glory, suffered thus meekly and unjustly from his own creatures, with what face can we ever complain of any injury done to us? Thirdly, to be very watchful to prevent the very first beginnings of anger, and to that purpose to mortifie all inward peevishness and frowardness of mind, which is a sin in it self, though it proceed no further, but will also be sure, if it be cherished, to break out into open effects of anger. Therefore, whenever thou findest the least rising of it within thee, make as much haste to check it, as thou wouldst to quench a fire in thy house; but be sure thou bring no fuel to it, by entertaining any thoughts that may encrease it. And at such time, especially, keep a more strict watch over thy tongue, that it break not out into any angry speeches; for that breath will fan the fire, not only in thine adversary, but thy self too; therefore, though thy heart be hot within, stifle the flame, and let it not break out: And the greater the temptation is, the more earnestly lift up thy heart to God, to assist thee to overcome it. Fourthly, often remember how great punishments thy sins have deserved; and then, whether thy sufferings be from God or man, thou wilt acknowledge them to be far short of what is due to thee, and therefore wilt be ashamed to be impatient at them.

Consideration.

21. The third Virtue is CONSIDERATION, and this in a most special manner we owe to our souls: For without it we shall, as rash unadvised people use to do, rush them into infinite perils. Now this Consideration is either of our State, or of our Actions. By our State, I mean what our condition is to God-ward, whether it be such, that we may reasonably conclude our selves in his favour. This it much concerns us to consider and examine, and that not by those easy rules men are apt to frame to themselves, as, whether they believe that Christ died for their sins; that they are of the number of the elect, and shall certainly be saved. If these and the like were all that were required to put us into God's favour, none but some melancholy person could ever be out of it; for we are apt enough generally to believe comfortably of our selves. But the Rules God hath given us in his Word, are those by which we must be tried at the last day, and therefore are certainly the only safe ones by which to try our selves now. And the sum of those are, that whosoever continues in any one wilful sin, is not in his favour, nor can, if he do so die, hope for any mercy at his hand.

Of our State.

The Rule by which to try our State.

22. Now it is highly necessary we should consider what our condition is in this respect: For, since our life is nothing but a puff of breath in our nostrils, which may, for ought we know, be taken from us the next minute, it nearly concerns us to know

how we are provided for another world; that so, in case we want at present that oil in our lamps wherewith we are to meet the Bridegroom, *Matth.* 25. 8. we may timely get it; and not for want of it be ever shut out, like the foolish virgins, from his presence. The neglect of this Consideration hath undone many souls, some by too easy a belief, that they were in a good condition, without considering and trying themselves by the foregoing Rule, but presuming either upon some slight outward performances, or upon such a false faith, as I even now described; others by the wretched careless going on, without so much as asking themselves what their condition is, but hope they should do as well as their neighbours, and so never enquiring farther: Which wretched carelesness will as certainly undo the spiritual, as the like would do the temporal estate: Yet in that every man is wise enough to foresee, that a man that never takes any accounts of his estate, to see whether he be worth something or nothing, will be sure to be a beggar in the end. But in this far weightier matter we can generally be thus improvident.

The Danger of Inconsideration.

Our Actions. Before we do them.

23. The second thing we are to consider, is our Actions, and those either before or after the doing of them. In the first place, we are to consider before we act, and not to do any thing rashly or headily, but first to advise with our consciences, whether this be lawful to be done: For he that follows his own inclination, and does every thing which that moves him to, shall be sure to fall into a multitude of sins. Therefore consider soberly, and be assured of the lawfulness of the thing, before thou venture to do it. This advisedness is, in all worldly things, accounted so necessary a part of wisdom, that no man is accounted wise without it; a rash man we look upon as the next degree to a fool. And yet is sure, there is not so much need of looking about us in any thing, as in what concerns our souls; and that not only in respect of the great value of them above all things else, but also in regard of the great danger they are in, as hath been shew'd more at large in the beginning of the treatise.

After they are done.

24. Secondly, we are to consider the Actions when they are past also; that is, we are to examine whether they have been such as are allowable by the Laws of Christ. This is very necessary, whether they be good or bad; if they be good, the recalling them helpeth us to the comfort of a good conscience, and that comfort again encourageth us to go on in the like; and besides, it stirs us up to thankfulness to God, by whose grace alone we are enabled to do them. But if they be bad, then it is especially necessary that we thus examine them; for without this, it is impossible we should ever come to amendment; for, unless we observe them to have been amiss, we can never think it needful to amend, but shall still run on from one wickedness to another, which is the greatest curse any man can lie under.

Frequency of Consideration.

25. The oftner therefore we use this Consideration, the better; for the less likely it is that any of our sins shall escape our knowledge. It is much to be wisht that every man would thus every night try the actions of the day, that so, if he have done any thing amiss, he may soon check himself for it, and settle his resolutions against it, and not let it grow on to a habit and course. And that he may also early beg God's pardon, which will the easier be had, the sooner it is asked; every delay of that being a great increase of the sin. And surely, whoever means to take an account of himself at all, will find this the easier course; it being much easier to do it so, a little at a time, and while passages are fresh in his memory, than to take the account of a long time together. Now, if it be considered that every wilful sin must have a particular repentance, before it can be pardoned, methinks men should tremble to sleep without that repentance: For what assurance hath any man that lies down in his bed, that he shall ever rise again? And then how dangerous is the condition of that man that sleeps in an unrepented sin? The weighing of these several motives may be a means, by God's blessing, to bring us to the practice of this duty of Consideration, in all the parts of it.

Danger of omitting it.

SUNDAY VII.

Of Contentedness and the Contraries to it; Murmuring, Ambition, Covetousness, Envy; Helps to Contentedness; of Duties which concern our Bodies; of Chastity, &c. Helps to it; of Temperance.

Contentedness.

Sect. 1. THE Fourth VIRTUE is CONTENTEDNESS, and this surely is a duty we must owe to our selves, it being that without which it is impossible to be happy. This Contentedness is a well-pleasedness with that condition, whatever

it is, that God hath placed us in, not murmuring and repining at our lot, but chearfully welcoming whatsoever God sends. How great, and withal how pleasant a virtue this is, may appear by the contrariety it hath to several great and painful vices; so that where this is rooted in the heart, it subdues, not only some such single sin, but a cluster of them together.

2. And first, it is contrary to all Murmuring in general, which is a sin most hateful to God, as may appear by his sharp punishment of it on the *Israelites* in the wilderness, as you may read in several places of the books of *Exodus* and *Numbers*. And surely it is also very painful and uneasy to a man's self; for if, as the Psalmist saith, it be a *joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful*; we may, by the rule of contraries, conclude, it is a sad and unpleasant thing to be Murmuring; and, I doubt not, every man's own experience will confirm the truth of it. *Contrary to Murmuring.*

3. Secondly, it is contrary to Ambition: The ambitious man is always disliking his present condition, and that makes him so greedily to seek a higher; whereas he that is content with his own, lies quite out of the road of this temptation. Now Ambition is not only a great sin in it self, but it puts men upon many other: There is nothing so horrid, which a man that eagerly seeks greatness will stick at; lying, perjury, murder, or any thing will down with him, if they seem to tend to his advancement; and the uneasiness of it is answerable to the sin. This none can doubt of, that considers what a multitude of fears and jealousies, cares and distractions there are that attend Ambition in its progress, besides the great and publick ruins that usually befal it in the end. And therefore sure Contentedness is in this respect, as well a happiness as a virtue. *To Ambition.*

4. Thirdly, it is contrary to Covetousness; this the Apostle witnesseth, *Heb.* 13. 5. *Let your conversation be without Covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have*: Where you see Contentedness is set as the direct contrary to Covetousness. But of this there needs no other proof than common experience; for we see the covetous man never thinks he hath enough, and therefore can never be content; for no man can be said to be so, that thirsts after any thing he hath not. Now, that you may see how excellent and necessary a virtue this is, that secures us against Covetousness, it will not be amiss a little to consider the nature of that sin. *To Covetousness.*

5. That it is a very great crime is most certain; for it is contrary to the very foundation of all good life, I mean those three great Duties, to God, to our Selves, to our Neighbours. First, it is so contrary to our Duty to God, that Christ himself tells us, *Luke* 16. 13. *We cannot serve God and Mammon*: He that sets his heart upon wealth, must necessarily take it off from God. And this we daily see in the covetous man's practice; he is so eager in the gaining of riches, that he hath no time or care to perform any Duty to God; let but a good bargain or opportunity of gain come in his way, prayer and all duties of Religion must be neglected to attend it. Nay, when the committing the greatest sin against God, may be likely either to get or save him ought, his love of wealth quickly persuades him to commit it. *Covetousness contrary to our Duty to God.*

6. Secondly, it is contrary to the duty we owe our selves, and that both in respect of our souls and bodies. The covetous man despises his soul, sells that to eternal destruction for a little pelf; for so every man doth, that by any unlawful means seeks to enrich himself; nay, though he do it not by unlawful means, yet, if he have once set his heart upon wealth, he is that covetous person, upon whom the Apostle hath pronounced, *That he shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. 6. 10. Nor doth he only offend against his soul, but his body too; for he often denies that those necessary refreshments it wants, and for which his wealth (as far as it concerns himself) was given him. This is so constantly the custom of rich misers, that I need not prove it to you. *To our selves.*

7. In the third place, Covetousness is contrary to the duty we owe to our Neighbours; and that in both the parts of it, justice and charity. He that loves money immoderately, will not care whom he cheats and defrauds, so he may bring in gain to himself; and from hence spring those many tricks of deceit and cozenage so common in the world. As for charity, that is never to be hoped for from a covetous man, who dreads the lessening of his own heaps, more than the starving of his poor brother. You see how great a sin this is, that we may well say of it, as the Apostle doth, 1 *Tim.* 6. 10. *The love of money is the root of all evil*. And it is not much less uneasie than wicked; for between the care of getting, and the fear of losing, the covetous man enjoys no quiet hour. Therefore every man is deeply concerned, as he renders his happiness either in this world or the next, to guard himself against this sin; which he can no way do, but by possessing his heart with this virtue of Contentedness. *To our Neighbours.*

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Contentedness contrary to Envy. 8. In the fourth place, it is contrary to Envy; for he that is content with his own condition, hath no temptation to envy another's. How unchristian a sin this of Envy is, shall hereafter be shewed: At the present I need say no more, but that it is also a very uneasie one: it frets and gnaws the very heart of him that harbours it. But the worse the sin is, the more excellent still is this grace of Contentedness, which frees us from it. I suppose I have said enough to make you think this a very lovely and desirable virtue: And sure it were not impossible to be gained by any, that would but observe these few directions.

Helps to Contentedness. 9. First, to consider, that whatever our estate and condition in any respect be, it is that which is allotted us by God, and therefore is certainly the best for us, he being much better able to judge for us, than we for our selves; and therefore to be displeased at it, is in effect to say, We are wiser than he. Secondly, Consider throughly the vanity of all worldly things, how very little there is in them while we have them, and how uncertain we are to keep them; but above all, in how little stead they will stand us at the day of death or judgment; and then thou canst not think any of them much worth the desiring, and so wilt not be discontented for want of them. Thirdly, Suffer not thy fancy to run on things thou hast not: Many have put themselves out of love with what they have, only by thinking what they want. He that sees his neighbour possess somewhat, which himself hath not, is apt to think how happy he should be, if he were in that man's condition, and in the mean time never thinks of enjoying his own, which yet perhaps, in many respects, may be much happier than that of his neighbour's, which he so much admires. For we look but upon the outside of other mens conditions; and many a man, that is envy'd by his neighbours as a wonderful happy person, hath yet some secret trouble, which makes him think much otherwise of himself. Therefore never compare thy condition in any thing with those thou countest more prosperous than thy self, but rather do it with those thou knowest more unhappy, and then thou wilt find cause to rejoice in thine own portion. Fourthly, Consider how far thou art from deserving any good thing from God, and then thou canst not but with *Jacob*, Gen. 32. 10. confess, that thou art *not worthy of the least of those mercies* thou enjoyest; and instead of murmuring, that they are no more, wilt see reason to admire and praise the bounty of God, that they are so many. Fifthly, Be often thinking of the joys laid up for thee in heaven: Look upon that as thy home, on this world only as an inn, where thou art fain to take up in thy passage; and then, as a traveller expects not the same conveniences at an inn, that he hath at home, so thou hast reason to be content with whatever entertainment thou findest here, knowing thou art upon thy journey to a place of infinite happiness, which will make an abundant amends for all the uneasiness and hardship thou canst suffer in the way. Lastly, Pray to God, from whom all good things do come, that he will, to all his other blessings, add this of a contented mind, without which thou canst have no taste or relish of any other.

Diligence. 10. A fifth duty is DILIGENCE: This is made up of two parts, Watchfulness and Industry; and both these we owe to our souls.

Watchfulness against Sin. 11. First, Watchfulness, in obsereing all the dangers that threaten them. Now, since nothing can endanger our souls, but sin, this Watchfulness is principally to be imployed against that; and, as in a besieged city, where there is any weak part, there it is necessary to keep the strongest guard, so it is here, wherever thou findest thy inclinations such, as are most likely to betray thee to sin, there it concerns thee to be especially watchful: Observe therefore carefully to what sins either thy natural temper, thy company, or thy course of life do particularly incline thee, and watch thy self very narrowly in those; yet do not so lay out all thy care on those, as to leave thy self open to any other; for that may give Satan as much advantage on the other side; but let thy Watch be general against all Sin, though in a special manner against those, which are like oftenest to assault thee.

Industry in improving Gifts. 12. The second part of Diligence is Industry or labour, and this also we owe to our souls; for without it they will as little prosper, as the vineyard of the sluggard, which *Solomon* describes, *Prov.* 24. 30. For there is a husbandry of the Soul, as well as of the estate, and the end of the one, as of the other, is the increasing and improving of its riches. Now the riches of the soul are either natural or divine. By the natural I mean its faculties or reason, wit, memory, and the like; by the divine I mean the graces of God, which are not the soul's natural portion, but are given immediately by God; and both these we are to take care to improve, they being both talents intrusted to us for that purpose.

13. The way of improving the Natural, is by employing them so, as may bring in most honour to God: We must not let them lie idle by us through sloth, neither must we overwhelm them with intemperance and brutish pleasures, which is the case of too many; but we must employ them and set them on work: But then we must be sure it be not in the Devil's service, like many, who set their wit only to the profaning of God, or cheating their neighbours, and stuff their memories with such filthiness, as should never once enter their thoughts: Our use of them must be such, as may bring in most glory to God, most benefit to our neighbours, and may best fit us to make our accounts, when God shall come to reckon with us for them. *Of Nature.*

14. But the other part of the soul's riches is yet more precious, that is, Grace; and of this we must be especially careful to husband and improve it. This is a duty expresly commanded us by the Apostle, 2 *Pet.* 3. 18. *Grow in Grace.* And again in the first Chapter of that Epistle, Ver. 5. *Give all diligence to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge*, &c. Now the especial means of improving Grace, is by employing it, that is, by doing those things for the enabling of us, whereunto it was given us. This is a sure means, not only in respect of that easiness, which a custom of any thing brings in the doing of it, but principally, as it hath the promise of God, who hath promised, *Matt.* 25. 29. *That to him that hath* (that is, hath made use of what he hath) *shall be given, and he shall have abundance.* He that diligently and faithfully employs the first beginnings of Grace, shall yet have more; and he that in like manner husbands that more, shall yet have a greater degree; so that what *Solomon* saith of temporal riches, is also true of spiritual, *The hand of the diligent maketh rich.* *Of Grace.*

15. Therefore, whenever thou findest any good Motions in thy heart, remember that is a season for this spiritual husbandry: If thou hast but a check of conscience against any sin thou livest in, drive that on till it come to an hatred, and then that hatred till it come to a resolution; then from that resolution, proceed to some endeavours against it: Do this faithfully and sincerely, and thou shalt certainly find the Grace of God assisting thee, not only in every of these steps, but also enabling thee to advance still higher, till thou come to some victory over it. Yet to this industry thou must not fail to add thy prayers also, there being a promise, that God will *give the holy Spirit to them that ask it*, Matth. 7. 11. And therefore they that ask it not, have no reason to expect it. But it must be asked with such an earnestness, as is some way answerable to the value of the thing, which, being infinitely more precious than all the world, both in respect of its own worth, and its usefulness to us, we must beg it with much more zeal and earnestness, than all temporal blessings, or else we shew our selves despisers of it. *To improve good Motions.*

16. Having directed you to the means of improving Grace, I shall, to quicken you to it, mention the great Danger of the contrary; and that is not, as in other things, the losing only those further degrees, which our industry might have helped us to, but it is the losing even of what we already have: *For from him that hath not* (that is again, hath not made use of what he hath) *shall be taken away even that which he hath*, Matth. 25. 29. God will withdraw the Grace which he sees so neglected, as we see in that parable; The talent was taken from him that had only hid it in a napkin, and had brought in no gain to his lord. And this is a most sad punishment, the greatest that can befal any man before he comes to hell; indeed it is some kind of foretaste of it, it is the delivering him up to the power of the Devil, and it is the banishing him from the face of God, which are not the least parts of the misery of the damned, and it is also the binding a man over to that fuller portion of wretchedness in another world, for that is the last doom of the unprofitable servant, *Matth.* 25. 30. *Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* You see there are no light Dangers that attend this neglect of Grace; and therefore, if we have any love, nay, any common pity to our Souls, we must set our selves to this industry. I have now done with those VIRTUES which respect our SOULS, I come now to those which concern our BODIES. *The Danger of the contrary.*

17. The first of which is CHASTITY or PURITY, which may well be set in the front of the duties we owe to our bodies, since the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 6. 18. sets the contrary as the especial sin against them, *He that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own Body.* *Chastity.*

18. Now this Virtue of Chastity consists in a perfect abstaining from all kinds of uncleanness, not only that of adultery and fornication, but all other more unnatural sorts of it, committed either upon our selves, or with any other. In a word, all acts of that kind are utterly against Chastity, save only in lawful marriage: And even there men are not to think themselves let loose to please their brutish appetites, but are to

keep themselves within such rules of moderation, as agree to the ends of marriage; which being these two, the begetting of children, and the avoiding of fornication, nothing must be done which may hinder the first of these ends; and the second aiming only at the subduing of lust, the keeping men from any sinful effects of it, is very contrary to that end, to make marriage an occasion of heightning and inflaming it.

Uncleanness forbidden in the very lowest Degrees. 19. But this Virtue of Chastity reacheth not only to the restraining of the grosser act, but to all lower degrees; it sets a guard upon our eyes, according to that of our Saviour, *Matth.* 5. 28. *He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;* and upon our hand, as appears by what Christ adds in that place, *If thy hand offend thee, cut it off;* ver. 30. so also upon our tongues, that they speak no immodest or filthy words, *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth*, Ephes. 4. 29. Nay, upon our very thoughts and fancies; we must not entertain any foul or filthy desires, not so much as the imagination of any such thing. Therefore, he that forbears the grosser act, and yet allows himself in any of these, it is to be suspected, that it is rather some outward restraint that keeps him from it, than the conscience of the sin: For if it were that, it would keep him from these too, these being sins also, and very great ones, in God's sight. Besides, he that lets himself loose to these, puts himself in very great danger of the other, it being much more easie to abstain from all, than to secure against the one, when the other is allowed. But above all, it is to be considered, that even these lower degrees are such, as make men very odious in God's eyes, who seeth the heart, and loves none that are not pure there.

The Mischiefs of it. 20. The loveliness of this Virtue of Chastity needs no other way of describing, than by considering the Loathsomness and Mischiefs of the contrary sin, which is, first, very brutish; those desires are but the same that the beasts have; and then how far are they sunk below the nature of men, that can boast of their sins of that kind, as of their special excellency! When, if that be the measure, a goat is the more excellent creature. But indeed they, that eagerly pursue this part of bestiality, do often leave themselves little, besides their human shape, to difference them from beasts; this sin so clouds the understanding, and defaceth the reasonable Soul. Therefore *Solomon* very well describes the young man that was going to the harlot's house, *Prov.* 7. 22. *He goeth after her, as an ox goeth to the slaughter.* *To the Soul.*

To the Body. 21. Nor, secondly, are the effects of it better to the Body than to the mind. The many foul and filthy, besides painful diseases, which often follow this sin, are sufficient witnesses how mischievous it is to the Body. And alas! how many are there, that have thus made themselves the Devil's martyrs? suffered such torments in the pursuit of this sin, as would exceed the invention of the greatest tyrant? Surely, they that pay thus dear for damnation, very well deserve to enjoy the purchase.

The Judgments of God against it. 22. But thirdly, Besides the natural fruits of this sin, it is attended with very great and heavy Judgments from God. The most extraordinary and miraculous Judgment that ever befel any place, fire and brimstone from heaven upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, was for this sin of Uncleanness: And many examples likewise of God's vengeance, may be observed on particular persons for this sin. The incest of *Amnon* cost him his life, as you may read, 2 *Sam.* 13. *Zimri* and *Cozbi* were slain in the very act, *Numb.* 25. 8. And no person, that commits the like, hath any assurance it shall not be his own case. For how secretly soever it be committed, it cannot be hid from God, who is the sure avenger of all such wickedness. Nay, God hath very particularly threatned this sin, 1 *Cor.* 3. 17. *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.* This sin of Uncleanness is a kind of sacrilege, a polluting those bodies, which God hath chosen for his temples; and therefore no wonder if it be thus heavily punished.

It shuts out from Heaven. 23. Lastly, This sin shuts us out from the kingdom of Heaven, wherein no impure thing can enter: And we never find any list of those sins, which bar men thence, but this of Uncleanness hath a special part in it. Thus it is, *Gal.* 5. 19. And so again, 1 *Cor.* 6. 9. If we will thus pollute our selves, we are fit company only for those black spirits, the Devil and his angels; and therefore, with them we must expect our portion, where our flames of lust shall end in flames of fire.

Helps to Chastity. 24. All this laid together, may surely recommend the Virtue of Chastity to us; for the preserving of which we must be very careful, first, to check the beginnings of the temptation, to cast away the very first fancy of lust with indignation; for, if you once fall to parley and talk with it, it gains still more upon you, and then it will be harder to resist: Therefore your way in this temptation is to fly, rather than fight with it. This is very necessary, not only that we may avoid the danger of proceeding to act the sin,

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but also in respect of the present fault of entertaining such fancies, which of it self, though it should never proceed further, is, as hath been shewed, a great abomination before God. Secondly, have a special care to fly idleness, which is the proper soil for these filthy weeds to grow in, and keep thy self always busied in some innocent or virtuous employment; for then these fancies will be less apt to offer themselves. Thirdly, never suffer thy self to recal any unclean passages of thy former life with delight; for that is to act over the sin again, and will be so reckoned by God: Nay, perhaps, thus deliberately to think of it, may be a greater guilt than a rash acting of it: For this both shews thy heart to be set upon filthiness, and is also a preparation to more acts of it. Fourthly, forbear the company of such light and wanton persons, as, either by the filthiness of their discourse, or any other means, may be a snare to thee. Fifthly, pray earnestly that God would give thee the spirit of purity, especially at the time of any present temptation. Bring the unclean Devil to Christ, to be cast out, as did the man in the Gospel; and if it will not be cast out with prayer alone, add fasting to it; but be sure thou do not keep up the flame by any high or immoderate feeding. The last remedy, when the former prove vain, is marriage, which becomes a duty to him that cannot live innocently without it. But even here there must be care taken, lest this, which should be for his good, become not to him an occasion of falling, for want of sobriety in the use of marriage. But this I have toucht on already, and therefore need add no more, but an earnest intreaty, that men would consider seriously of the foulness and danger of this sin of Uncleanness, and not let the commonness of it lessen their hatred of it, but rather make them abhor that shameless impudence of the world, that can make light of this sin, against which God hath pronounced such heavy curses? *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*, Heb. 13. 4. and so he will certainly do all sorts of unclean persons whatsoever.

25. The second Virtue that concerns our bodies, is TEMPERANCE. And the exercises of that are divers; as first, Temperance in Eating; secondly, in Drinking; thirdly, in Sleep; fourthly, in Recreation; fifthly, in Apparel. I shall speak of them severally; and first, of Temperance in Eating. This Temperance is observed when our Eating is agreeable to those ends, to which Eating is by God and nature designed; those are first, the being; secondly, the well-being of our bodies.

Temperance. *In Eating.* *Ends of Eating.*

26. Man is of such a frame, that Eating becomes necessary to him for the Preserving his Life, hunger being a natural disease, which will prove deadly, if not prevented, and the only physick for it is Eating, which is therefore become a necessary means of keeping us alive. And that is the first end of Eating; and as men use not to take physick for pleasure, but remedy, so neither should they eat.

Preserving of Life.

27. But secondly, God hath been so bountiful as to provide, not only for the being, but the well-being of our bodies; and therefore we are not tied to such strictness, that we may eat no more than will just keep us from starving, but we may also eat whatsoever, either for kind or quantity, most tends to the Health and Welfare of them: Now that Eating, which is agreeable to these ends, is within the bounds of Temperance, as, on the contrary, whatsoever is contrary to them, is a transgression against it; he therefore, that sets up to himself other ends of Eating, as either the pleasing of his taste, or (what is yet worse) the pampering of his body, that he may the better serve his lust, he directly thwarts and crosses these ends of God; for he that hath those aims, doth that which is very contrary to Health, yea, to life it self, as appears by the many diseases and untimely deaths, which surfeiting and uncleanness daily bring on men.

Of Health.

28. He therefore that will practise this Virtue of Temperance, must neither eat so much, nor of any such sorts of meat (provided he can have other) as may be hurtful to his health. What the sorts or quantities should be, is impossible to set down, for that differs according to the several constitutions of men; some men may with Temperance eat a great deal, because their stomachs require it, when another may be guilty of intemperance in eating but half so much, because it is more than is useful to him. And so also for the sort of meat, it may be niceness and luxury for some to be curious in them, when yet some degree of it may be necessary to the infirmities of a weak stomach, which, not out of wantonness, but disease, cannot eat the courser meats. But I think it may in general be said, that to healthful bodies the plainest meats are generally the most wholsom. But every man must in this be left to judge for himself; and that he may do it aright, he must be careful, that he never suffer himself to be enslaved to his palate, for that will be sure to satisfie it self, whatever becomes of health or life.

Rules of Temperance in Eating.

Means of it. 29. To secure him the better let him consider, first, how unreasonable a thing it is, that the whole body should be subject to this one sense of tasting, that it must run all hazards only to please that. But it is yet much more so, that the diviner part, the soul, should also be thus enslaved: And yet thus it is in an intemperate person, his very soul must be sacrificed to this brutish appetite; for the sin of intemperance, though it be acted by the body, yet the soul must share in the eternal punishment of it. Secondly, consider how extreme short and vanishing this pleasure is, it is gone in a moment, but the pains that attend the excess of it are much more durable; and then surely it agrees not with that common reason, wherewith, as men, we are endued, to set our hearts upon it. But then, in the third place, it agrees yet worse with the temper of a Christian, who should have his heart so purified and refin'd with the expectation of those higher and spiritual joys he looks for in another world, that he should very much despise these gross and brutish pleasures, which beasts are as capable of as we; and to them we may well be contented to leave them, it being the highest their natures can reach to: But for us, who have so much more excellent hopes, it is an intolerable shame that we should account them as any part of our happiness. Lastly, the sin of gluttony is so great and dangerous, that Christ thought fit to give an especial warning against it: *Take heed to your selves, that your hearts be not over-charged with surfeiting, &c. Luke* 21. 34. And you know what was the end of the rich glutton, *Luke* 16. He that had *fared deliciously every day*, at last wants *a drop of water to cool his tongue*. So much for the first sort of Temperance, that of Eating.

SUNDAY VIII.

Of Temperance in Drinking; False Ends of Drinking, viz. *Good-fellowship, putting away Cares*, &c.

Temperance in Drinking. Sect. 1. THE Second is TEMPERANCE in Drinking; and the ends of Eating and Drinking being much the same, I can give no other direct rules in this, than what were given in the former; to wit, that we drink neither of such sorts of liquor, nor in such quantities, as may not agree with the right ends of Drinking, the preserving our lives and healths: Only in this there will be need of putting in one caution; for our understandings being in more danger to be hurt by Drinking than meat, we must rather take care to keep that safe, and rather not drink what we might safely in respect of our health, if it be in danger to distemper our reason. This I say, because it is possible some men's brains may be so weak, that their heads cannot bear that ordinary quantity of Drink, which would do their bodies no harm. And whoever is of this temper, must strictly abstain from that degree of Drink, or, that sort of it, which he finds hath that effect; yea, though it do in other respects appear not only safe, but useful to his health. For, though we are to preserve our healths, yet we are not to do it by a sin, as Drunkenness most certainly is.

False Ends of Drinking. 2. But alas! of those multitudes of Drunkards we have in the world, this is the case but of very few, most of them going far beyond what their health requires, yea, or can bear, even to the utter destruction thereof. And therefore it is plain men have set up to themselves some other Ends of Drinking, than those allowable ones forementioned. It may not be amiss a little to explain what they are, and withal to shew the unreasonableness of them.

Good fellowship. 3. The first and most owned is that which they call Good-fellowship: One man drinks to keep another company at it. But I would ask such a one, Whether if that man were drinking rank poison, he would pledge him for company? If he say he would not, I must tell him, that by the very same, nay, far greater reason, he is not to do this. For immoderate Drinking is that very poison; perhaps it doth not always work death immediate (yet there want not many instances of its having done even that, very many having died in their drunken fit) but that the custom of it does usually bring men to their ends, is past doubt; and therefore, though the poison works slowly, yet it is still poison. But however, it doth at the present work that, which a wise man would more abhor than death, it works madness and frenzy, turns the man into a beast, by drowning that reason which should difference him from one. Certainly the effects of Drink are such, that had being drunk been first enjoined as a punish-

punishment, we should have thought him a more than ordinary tyrant that had invented it.

4. A second end of Drinking is said to be the maintaining of Friendship and Kindness amongst men. But this is strangely unreasonable, that men should do that towards the maintaining of Friendship, which is really the greatest mischief that can be done to any man. Did ever any think to befriend a man by helping to destroy his estate, his credit, his life? Yet he that thus drinks with a man, does this and much more; he ruins his reason, yea, his soul, and yet this must be called the way of Preserving of Friendship. This is so ridiculous, that one would think none could own it, but when he were actually drunk. But besides, alas! experience shews us, that this is fitter to beget quarrels than preserve Kindness; as the many drunken brawls we every day see, with the wounds, and sometimes murders, that accompany them, do witness.

Preserving of Kindness.

5. A third end is said to be the Chearing of their Spirits, making them merry and jolly. But sure, if the mirth be such, that reason must be turned out of doors before it begin, it will be very little worth: One may say with *Solomon*, Eccles. 2. 2. *The laughter of such fools is madness.* And sure they that will be drunk, to put themselves in this temper, must, by the same reason, be glad of a frenzy, if they could but be sure it would be of the merry sort. But little do these merry folks think what sadness they are all this while heaping up to themselves, often in this world, when by some mad pranks they play in their jollity, they bring mischief upon themselves; but however certainly in another, where this mirth will be sadly reckoned for.

Chearing the Spirits.

6. A fourth end is said to be the Putting away of Cares; but I shall ask, What those Cares are? Be they such as should be put away? Perhaps they are some checks and remorses of conscience, which must be thus charm'd. And, I doubt, this hath proved too effectual with many, to the laying them asleep. But this is the wickedest folly in the world; for if thou thinkest not these checks to have something considerable in them, why do they trouble thee? but if thou do, it is impossible thou canst hope this can long secure thee from them. Thou mayst thus stop their mouths for a while, but they will one day cry the louder for it. Suppose a thief or a murderer knew he were pursued to be brought to justice, would he, think you, to put away the fear of being hang'd, fall to Drinking, and in the mean time take no care for his escape? Or would you not think him desperately mad, if he did? Yet this is the very case here, thy conscience tells thee of thy danger, that thou must e'er long be brought before God's judgment-seat; and is it not madness for thee, instead of endeavouring to get thy pardon, to drink away the thought of thy danger? But, in the second place, suppose these Cares be some worldly ones, and such as are fit to be put away; then for shame do not so disgrace thy reason, thy Christianity, as not to let them be as forcible to that end as a little Drink. Thy reason will tell thee it is in vain to care, where Care will bring no advantage; and thy Christianity will direct thee to one, on whom thou mayst *safely cast all thy Cares, for he careth for thee*, 1 Pet. 5. 7. And therefore, unless thou meanest to renounce being both a man and a Christian, never betake thee to this pitiful shift, to rid thee of thy Cares. But besides, this will not do the deed neither, for though it may at the present, whilst thou art in the height of the drunken fit, keep thee from the sense of thy Cares, yet, when that is over, they will return again with greater violence; and, if thou hast any conscience, bring a new Care with them, even that which ariseth from the guilt of so foul a sin.

Putting away Cares.

7. A fifth end is said to be the Passing away of Time. This, though it be as unreasonable as any of the former, yet, by the way, it serves to reproach idleness, which is, it seems, so burthensom a thing, that even this vilest employment is preferr'd before it. But this is in many a very false plea. For they often spend Time at the pot, not only when they have nothing else to do, but even to the neglect of their most necessary business. However, it is in all a most unreasonable one; for there is no man but he may find somewhat or other to employ himself in. If he have little worldly business of his own, he may yet do somewhat to the benefit of others: but however, there is no man but hath a soul, and if he will look carefully to that, he need not complain for want of business. Where there are so many corruptions to mortifie, so many inclinations to watch over, so many temptations (whereof this of Drunkenness is not the least) to resist, the graces of God to improve and stir up, and former neglects of all these to lament, sure there can never want sufficient employment; for all these require time, and so men at their deaths find; for those that have all their lives made it their business to drive away their Time, would then give all the world to redeem it. And sure, where there is much leisure from worldly affairs, God expects to have the more

Passing away of Time.

time thus employed in spiritual exercises. But it is not likely those meaner sort of persons, to whom this book is intended, will be of the number of those that have much leisure; and therefore I shall no further insist on it, only I shall say this, that what degrees of leisure they at any time have, it concerns them to employ to the benefit of their souls, and not to bestow it to the ruin of them, as they do, who spend it in Drinking.

Preventing Reproach. 8. A sixth end is said to be the Preventing of that Reproach, which is by the world cast on those that will in this be stricter than their neighbours. But in answer to this, I shall first ask, What is the harm of such Reproach? Sure it cannot equal the least of those mischiefs Drunkenness betrays us to. Nay, if we will take our Saviour's word, it is a happiness, *Blessed*, saith he, *are ye, when men shall revile you, and say all manner of evil against you for my sake*, Matth. 5. 11. And St. *Peter* tells us, 1 *Pet*. 4. 14. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye*: And sure, to be reproached for obedience to any command of Christ's, is to be reproached for his name. Secondly, let it be remembred that at our baptism we solemnly renounced the world; and shall we now so far consider it, as for a few scoffs of it, to run our selves on all the temporal evils before-mentioned; and, which is much worse, the wrath of God and eternal destruction? But thirdly, if you fear Reproach, why do ye do that which will bring Reproach upon you from all wise and good men, whose opinion alone is to be regarded? And it is certain, Drinking is the way to bring it on you from all such. And to comfort thy self against that, by thinking thou art still applauded by the foolish and worst sort of men, is, as if all the madmen in the world should agree to count themselves the only sober persons, and all others mad; which yet sure will never make them the less mad, nor others the less sober. Lastly, consider the heavy doom Christ hath pronounced on those that are ashamed of him; and so are all those that, for fear of Reproach, shall shrink from their obedience to him, *Mark* 8. 38. *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy Angels.* There is none but will at that day desire to be owned by Christ; but whoever will not here own him, that is, cleave fast to his commands, notwithstanding all the scorns, nay, persecutions of the world, shall then certainly be cast off by him. And he that will adventure thus to maintain his credit among a company of fools and madmen, deserves well to have it befal him. But, after all this, it is not sure that even these will despise thee for thy sobriety: It is possible they may seem to do so, to fright thee out of it; but if their hearts were searched, it would be found they do, even against their wills, bear a secret reverence to sober persons, and none fall more often under their scorn and despising, than those that run with them to the same excess of riot; for even he that sticks not to be drunk himself, will yet laugh at another that he sees so.

Pleasure of the Drink. 9. There is a seventh end, which, though every man thinks too base to own, yet it is too plain it prevails with many; and that is, the bare Pleasure of the Drink: But to these, I confess, 'twill not be fit to say much; for he that is come to this lamentable degree of sottishness, is not like to receive benefit by any thing that can be said: Yet let me tell even this man, that he, of all others, hath the most means of discerning his fault; for this being such a ground of Drinking, as no body will own, he is condemned of himself, yea, and all his fellow Drunkards too; for their denying it is a plain sign they acknowledge it a most abominable thing. And if *Esau* were called a profane person, *Heb*. 12. 16. for *selling but his birth-right for a mess of pottage*, and that too, when he had the necessity of hunger upon him, what name of reproach can be bad enough for him, who sells his health, his reason, his God, his soul, for a cup of Drink, and that when he is so far from needing it, that perhaps he hath already more than he can keep? I shall say no more to this sort of persons, but let me warn all those that go on in this sin, on any of the former grounds, that a little time will bring them even to this which they profess to loath; it being daily seen that those, which first were drawn into the sin for the love of the company, at last continue in it for love of the Drink.

Bargaining. 10. I can think but of one end more; that is, that of Bargaining. Men say it is necessary for them to drink in this one respect of trading with their neighbours, Bargains being most conveniently to be struck up at such meetings. But this is yet a worse end than all the rest, for the bottom of it is an aim of cheating and defrauding others: We think, when men are in drink, we shall the better be able to over-reach them, and so this adds the sin of cozenage and defrauding to that of Drunkenness. Now that this is indeed the intent, is manifest; for if it were only the dispatch of Bargains were aimed at, we should choose to take men with their wits about them; therefore, the

taking them when Drink hath distemper'd them, can be for nothing but to make advantage of them. Yet this often proves a great folly as well as a sin; for he that drinks with another in hope to over-reach him, doth many times prove the weaker-brain'd, and becomes drunk first, and then he gives the other that opportunity of cheating him, which he designed for the cheating of the other. Now this end of Drinking is so far from becoming an excuse, that it is an huge heightning of the sin: For if we may not drink intemperately upon any occasion, much less upon so wicked an one as is the cozening and defrauding of our brethren.

Degrees of this Sin. 11. I suppose I have now shewed you the unreasonableness of those motives, which are ordinarily brought in excuse of this sin. I am yet farther to tell you, that it is not only that huge Degree of Drunkenness which makes men able neither to go nor speak, which is to be lookt on as a sin, but all lower Degrees, which do at all work upon the understanding, whether by dulling it and making it less fit for any employment, or by making it too light and airy, apt to apish and ridiculous mirth, or, what is worse, by enflaming men into rage and fury. These, or whatever else make any change in the man, are to be reckoned in to this sin of Drunkenness: Nay, further, the Drinking beyond the natural ends of Drinking, that is, beyond moderate refreshment, is a Sin, though by the strength of a man's brain it makes not the least change in him; and therefore those that are not actually drunk, yet can spend whole days, or any considerable part of them in Drinking, are so far from being innocent, that that greater woe belongs to them, which is pronounced, *Isa.* 5. 22. against those that are mighty to drink. For though such a man may make a shift to preserve his wits, yet that wit serves him to very little purpose, when his employment is still but the same with him that is the most sottishly drunk, that is, to pour down Drink.

The great Guilt of the strong Drinkers. 12. Nay, this man is guilty of the greatest waste; first, of the good creatures of God; that Drink which is by God's providence intended for the refreshing and relieving of us, is abus'd and mispent, when it is drunk beyond that measure which those ends require: And sure, there is not the meanest of these creatures we enjoy, but the abuse of them shall one day be accounted for; and he that drinks longest, hath the most of that guilt. But, in the second place, this is a waste of that which is much more precious, our time, which is allowed us by God to work out our salvation in, [illegible] must be strictly reckoned for; and therefore ought every minute of it to be most [illegible]stily husbanded to that end in actions of good life; but when it is thus laid out, [illegible]ends to the direct contrary, even the working out our damnation. Besides, he [th]at thus drinks, though he escape being drunk himself, he is yet guilty of all the [Dr]unkenness that any of his company fall under; for he gives them encouragement to drink on by his example, especially if he be one of any authority; but if he be one whose company the rest are fond of, his company is then a certain ensnaring of them; for then they will drink too, rather than lose him. There is yet a greater fault that many of these stronger-brain'd Drinkers are guilty of, that is, the setting themselves purposely to make others drunk, playing, as it were, a prize at it, and counting it matter of triumph and victory to see others fall before them: This is a most horrible wickedness; it is the making our selves the Devil's factors, endeavouring all we can to draw our poor brethren into eternal misery, by betraying them to so grievous a sin; and therefore it may well be reckoned as the highest step of this vice of Drinking, as having in it the sin of mischieving others, added to the excess in our selves. And though it be lookt upon in the world, as a matter only of jest and merriment to make others drunk, that we may sport our selves with their ridiculous behaviour, yet that mirth will have a sad conclusion, there being a woe expresly threatned by God to this very sin, *Hab.* 2. 15. *Wo unto him that giveth his neighbour Drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunk, that thou mayst look on their nakedness:* And sure, he buys his idle pastime very dear, that takes it with such a woe attending it.

The great Mischiefs of this Sin. 13. I have now gone through the several motives to, and degrees of this Sin of Drunkenness, wherein I have been the more particular, because it is a sin so strangely reigning amongst us; no condition, no age, or scarce sex free from it, to the great dishonour of God, reproach of Christianity, and ruin, not only of our own souls hereafter, but even of all our present advantages and happiness in this life; there being no sin, which betrays each single committer to more Mischiefs in his understanding, his health, his credit, his estate, than this one doth. And we have reason to believe this sin is one of those common crying guilts, which have long lain heavy upon this Nation, and pull'd down those many sad judgments we have groaned under.

Exhortation to forsake it. 14. Therefore, Christian reader, let me now intreat, nay, conjure thee, by all that tenderness and love thou oughtest to have to the honour of God, the credit of thy

Christian profession, eternal welfare of thine own soul, the prosperity of the Church and Nation whereof thou art a member; nay, by that love, which certainly thou hast to thy own temporal welfare, to think sadly of what hath been spoken, and then judge whether there be any pleasure in this sin, which can be any tolerable recompence for all those mischiefs it brings with it. I am confident no man in his wits can think there is; and if there be not, then be ashamed to be any longer that fool, which shall make so wretched a bargain, but begin at this instant a firm and a faithful resolution, never once more to be guilty of this swinish sin, how often soever thou hast heretofore fallen into it, and in the fear of God betake thee to a strict Temperance; which, when thou hast done, thou wilt find thou hast made, not only a gainful, but a pleasant exchange; for there is no man that hath tried both courses, but his own heart will tell him, there is infinitely more present comfort and pleasure in Sobriety and Temperance, than ever all his drunken revellings afforded him.

The Difficulties of doing so considered. Seeming Necessity of Drink. 15. The main Difficulty is the first breaking off the custom, and that arises partly from our selves, partly from others. That from our selves may be of two sorts; the first is, when by the habit of Drinking, we have brought such false thirsts upon our selves, that our bodies seem to require it, and this wants nothing but a little patience to overcome. Do but refrain some few days, and it will afterwards grow easie; for the hardness arising only from custom, the breaking off that does the business. If thou say, it is very uneasie to do so, consider, whether, if thou hadst some disease which would certainly kill thee, if thou didst not for some little time refrain immoderate Drinking, thou wouldst not rather forbear than dye. If thou wouldst not, thou art so brutish a sot, that it is in vain to perswade thee; but if thou hadst, then consider how unreasonable it is for thee not to do it in this case also; the habit of Drinking may well pass for a mortal disease, it proves so very often to the body, but will most certainly to the soul; and therefore, it is madness to stick at that uneasiness in the cure of this, which thou wouldst submit to in a less danger. Set therefore but a resolute purpose to endure that little trouble for a small time, and this first Difficulty is conquered; for after thou hast a while refrained, it will be perfectly easie to do so still.

Want of Employment. 16. The second difficulty is that of spending the time, which those that have made Drinking their trade and business, know scarce how to dispose of. But the very naming of this difficulty directs to the cure; get thee some business, somewhat to employ thy self in, which, as I have already shewed, will be easily found by all sorts of persons; but those meaner to whom I now write, can sure never want it ready at hand, they being generally such as are to be maintained by their labour; and therefore to them I need only give this advice, to be diligent in that business they have, to follow that close, as they ought, and they will have little occasion to seek out this way of spending their time.

Perswasions and Reproaches of Men. 17. There is another sort of difficulty, which I told you arises from others, and that is either from their Perswasions or Reproaches. It is very likely, if thy old companions see thee begin to fall off, they will set hard to thee, to bring thee back to thy old course; they will urge to thee the unkindness of forsaking the company of thy friends, the sadness of renouncing all that mirth and jollity, which good-fellows (as they call them) enjoy, and if thou canst not thus be won, they will affright thee with the Reproach of the world, and so try if they can mock thee out of thy sobriety.

The Means of resisting them. 18. The way to overcome this difficulty is to foresee it: Therefore, when thou first enterest on thy course of Temperance, thou art to make account thou shalt meet with these (perhaps many other) temptations; and that thou mayst make a right judgment, whether they be worthy to prevail with thee, take them beforehand and weigh them: Consider whether that false kindness, that is maintained among men by Drinking, be worthy to be compared with that real and everlasting kindness of God, which is lost by it; whether that foolish vain mirth bear any weight with the present joys of a good conscience here, or with those greater of heaven hereafter. Lastly, whether the unjust reproach of wicked men, the shame of the world, be so terrible, as the just reproof of thine own conscience at the present, and that eternal confusion of face, that shall befal all those that go on in this sin at the last day. *Weigh the Advantages with the Hurt.* Weigh all these, I say, I need not say in the balance of the Sanctuary, but even in the scales of common reason, and sure thou wilt be forced to pronounce, that the motives to Temperance infinitely outweigh those against it. When thou hast thus advisedly judged, then fix thy resolution accordingly; and whenever any of these temptations come to stagger thee, remember thou hast formerly weighed them, knowest the just value of them, and that they are a most unworthy price for those precious advantages thou must give in exchange for them. And therefore hold fast thy resolution, and with indignation reject all motions to the contrary.

19. But be sure thou thus reject them at their very first tender, and do not yield in the least degree; for if once thou givest ground, thou art lost, the sin will by little and little prevail upon thee. Thus we see many, who have professed to be resolved upon great Temperance, yet, for want of this care, have adventured into the company of good-fellows; when they have been there, they have at the first been over-intreated to take a cup, after that another, till at last they have taken their rounds as freely as any of them, and in that flood of Drink drowned all their sober resolutions. Therefore, whoever thou art, that dost really desire to forsake the sin, take care to avoid the occasions and beginnings of it; to which end it will be good openly to declare and own thy purposes of sobriety, that so thou mayst discourage men from assaulting thee. But, if either thou art ashamed to own it, or seemest to be so, they will quickly make use of that shame to bring thee to break it.

Reject the Temptation at the very Beginning.

20. If thou be thus wary to keep thee from the first beginnings, thou art then sure never to be overtaken with this sin; for it is like the keeping the outworks of a besieged city, which so long as they are stoutly defended, there is no danger; but if they be either surprized or yielded, the city cannot long hold out. The advice therefore of the wise man is very agreeable to this matter, *Ecclus.* 19. 1. *He that despiseth small things shall perish by little and little.* But because, as the Psalmist saith, *Psalm* 127. 1. *Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain:* Therefore, to this guard of thy self, add thy most earnest prayers to God, that he will also watch over thee, and by the strength of his grace, enable thee to resist all temptations to this sin.

The Security of doing so.

21. If thou do in the sincerity of thy heart use these Means, there is no doubt but thou wilt be able to overcome this vice, how long soever thou hast been accustomed to it; therefore, if thou do still remain under the power of it, never excuse thy self by the impossibility of the task, but rather accuse the falseness of thy own heart, that hath still such a love to this sin, that thou wilt not set roundly to the Means of subduing it.

The Efficacy of these Means, if not hindered by love of the Sin.

22. Perhaps, the great commonness of the sin, and thy particular custom of it, may have made it so much thy familiar, thy bosom acquaintance, that thou art loth to entertain hard thoughts of it, very unwilling thou art to think that it means thee any hurt, and therefore art apt to speak peace to thy self, to hope, that either this is no sin, or at most but a frailty, such as will not bar thee out of heaven: But deceive not thy self, for thou mayst as well say there is no heaven, as that Drunkenness shall not keep thee thence: I am sure the same Word of God, which tells us there is such a place of happiness, tells us also that Drunkards are of the number of those that shall not inherit it, 1 *Cor.* 6. 10. And again, *Gal.* 5. 21. Drunkenness is reckoned among those works of the flesh, which they that do, *shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* And indeed, had not these plain texts, yet mere reason would tell us the same, that that is a place of infinite purity, such as flesh and blood, till it be refined and purified, is not capable of, as the Apostle tells us, 1. *Cor.* 15. 53. and if, as we are mere men, we are too gross and impure for it, we must sure be more so, when we have changed our selves into swine, the foulest of beasts; we are then prepared for the Devils to enter into, as they did into the herd, *Mark* 5. 13. and that not only some one or two, but a legion, a troop and multitude of them. And of this we daily see examples; for where this sin of Drunkenness hath taken possession, it usually comes as an harbinger to abundance of others; each act of Drunkenness prepares a man, not only for another of the same sin, but of others: Lust and rage, and all brutish appetites, are then let loose, and so a man brings himself under that curse, which was the saddest *David* knew how to foretel to any, *The falling from one wickedness to another.* If all this be not enough to affright thee out of this drunken fit, thou mayst still wallow in thy vomit; continue in this sottish, senseless condition, till the flames of hell rouse thee; and then thou wilt by sad experience find what now thou wilt not believe, *That the end of those things*, as the Apostle saith, *Rom.* 6. 21. *is death.* God in his infinite mercy timely awake the hearts of all that are in this sin, that by a timely forsaking it they may *fly from the wrath to come.* I have now done with this second part of Temperance, concerning Drinking.

That love makes a man loth to believe it dangerous.

SUNDAY IX.

Temperance in Sleep; the Rule of it, &c. Mischiefs of Sloth, of Recreations, Cautions to be observed in them: Of Apparel, &c.

Sleep.

Sect. 1. THE Third part of TEMPERANCE concerns SLEEP; and Temperance in that also must be measured by the end for which Sleep was ordained by God, which was only the refreshing and supporting of our frail bodies, which being of such a temper that continual labour and toil tires and wearies them out, Sleep comes as a medicine to that weariness, as a repairer of that decay, that so we may be enabled to such labours as the duties of our Religion, or works of our calling require of us. Sleep was intended to make us more profitable, not more idle; as we give rest to our beasts, not that we are pleased with their doing nothing, but that they may do us the better service.

The Rule of Temperance therein.

2. By this therefore you may judge what is temperate Sleeping; to wit, that which tends to the refreshing and making us more lively and fit for action; and to that end a moderate degree serves best. It will be impossible to set down just how many hours is that moderate degree; because, as in eating, so in Sleep, some constitutions require more than others: Every man's own experience must in this judge for him, but then let him judge uprightly, and not consult with his sloth in the case; for that will still, with *Solomon*'s sluggard, cry, *A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep*, Prov. 24. 33. But take only so much as he really finds to tend to the end forementioned.

The many Sins that follow the Transgression of it.

3. He that doth not thus limit himself, falls into several Sins under this general one of sloth: As first, he wastes his time, that precious talent which was committed to him by God to improve, which he that sleeps away, doth like him in the Gospel, *Matt.* 25. 18. *Hide it in the earth*, when he should be trading with it; and you know what was the doom of that unprofitable servant, *ver.* 30. *Cast ye him into outer darkness*: He that gives himself to darkness of Sleep here, shall there have darkness without Sleep, but with *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. Secondly, he injures his body; immoderate Sleep fills that full of diseases, makes it a very sink of humours, as daily experience shews us. Thirdly, he injures his soul also, and that not only in robbing it of the service of the body, but in dulling its proper faculties, making them useless and unfit for those employments to which God hath designed them; of all which ill husbandry the poor soul must one day give account: Nay, lastly, he affronts and despises God himself in it, by crossing the very end of his creation, which was to serve God in an active obedience; but he that sleeps away his life, directly thwarts and contradicts that: And when God saith, *Man is born to labour*, his practice saith the direct contrary, that man is born to rest. Take heed therefore of giving thy self to immoderate Sleep, which is the committing of so many Sins in one.

Other Mischiefs of Sloth.

4. But besides the sin of it, it is also very hurtful in other respects; it is the sure bane of thy outward estate, wherein the sluggish person shall never thrive, according to that observation of the wise man, *Prov.* 23. 21. *Drowsiness shall cover a man with rags*; that is, the slothful man shall want convenient clothing: Nay, indeed, it can scarce be said that the sluggard lives. Sleep, you know, is a kind of death, and he that gives himself up to it, what doth he but die before his time? Therefore, if untimely death be to be looked upon as a curse, it must needs be a strange folly to choose that from our own sloth, which we dread so much from God's hand.

Temperance in Recreation.

5. The fourth part of Temperance concerns Recreations, which are sometimes necessary both to the body and the mind of a man, neither of them being able to endure a constant toil without somewhat of refreshment between; and therefore there is a very lawful use of them; but to make it so, it will be necessary to observe these cautions.

Cautions to be observed in them.

6. First, we must take care, that the kind of them be lawful, that they be such as have nothing of sin in them; we must not to recreate our selves, do any thing which is dishonourable to God, or injurious to our neighbour, as they do, who make profane or filthy back-biting discourse their Recreation. Secondly, we must take care that we use it with moderation; and to do so, we must, first, be sure not to spend too much time upon it, but remember that the end of Recreation is to fit us for business, not to be it self a business to us. Thirdly, we must not be too vehement and earnest

in it, nor set our hearts too much upon it; for that will both ensnare us to the using too much of it, and it will divert and take off our minds from our more necessary employments, like school-boys, who after a play-time, know not how to set themselves to their books again. Lastly, we must not set up to our selves any other end of Recreations, but that lawful one, of giving us moderate refreshment.

7. As, first, we are not to use Sports only to pass away our time, which we ought to study how to redeem, not fling away; and when it is remembred how great a work we have here to do, the *making our calling and election sure*, the securing our title to heaven hereafter, and how uncertain we are what time shall be allowed us for that purpose, it will appear, our time is that which of all other things we ought most industriously to improve. And therefore, sure we have little need to contrive ways of driving that away, which flies so fast of it self, and is so impossible to recover. Let them that can spend whole days and nights at cards and dice, and idle pastimes, consider this, and withal, whether they ever bestowed a quarter of that time towards that great business of their lives, for which all their time was given them, and then think what a woful reckoning they are like to make, when they come at last to account for that precious treasure of their time. Secondly, we must not let our covetousness have any thing to do in our Recreations; if we play at any game, let the end of our doing it be merely to recreate our selves, not to win money, and to that purpose be sure never to play for any considerable matter, for if thou do, thou wilt bring thy self into two dangers; the one of covetousness, and a greedy desire of winning, the other of rage and anger at thy ill fortune, if thou happen to lose; both which will be apt to draw thee into other sins besides themselves. Covetousness will tempt thee to cheat and cozen in gaming, and anger to swearing and cursing, as common experience shews us too often. If thou find thy self apt to fall into either of these in thy gaming, thou must either take some course to secure thy self against them, or thou must not permit thy self to play at all: For though moderate play be in it self not unlawful, yet if it be the occasion of sin, it is so to thee, and therefore must not be ventured on. For if Christ commands us so strictly to avoid temptations, that if our very eyes or hands offend us (that is, prove snares to us) we must rather part with them, than to be drawn to sin by them; how much rather must we part with any of these unnecessary Sports, than run the hazard of offending God by them? He that so plays, lays his soul to stake, which is too great a prize to be played away. Besides, he loses all the Recreation and Sport he pretends to aim at, and instead of that, sets himself to a greater toil than any of those labours are, he was to ease by it. For sure the desires and fears of the covetous, the impatience and rage of the angry man, are more real pains than any the most laborious work can be.

Undue Ends of Sports.

8. The last part of Temperance is that of Apparel, which we are again to measure by the agreeableness to the ends for which clothing should be used. Those are especially these three; first, the hiding of nakedness. This was the first occasion of Apparel, as you may read, *Gen.* 3. 21. and was the effect of the first sin; and therefore when we remember the original of clothes, we have so little reason to be proud of them, that, on the contrary, we have cause to be humbled and ashamed, as having lost that innocency which was a much greater ornament, than any the most glorious Apparel can be. From this end of clothing we are likewise engaged to have our Apparel modest, such as may answer this end of covering our Shame: And therefore all immodest fashions of Apparel, which may either argue the wantonness of the wearer, or provoke that of the beholder, are to be avoided.

Temperance in Apparel.

Apparel designed for covering of Shame.

9. A second end of Apparel, is the Fencing the body from Cold, thereby to preserve the health thereof. And this end we must likewise observe in our clothing; we must wear such kind of habits, as may keep us in that convenient warmth which is necessary to our healths. And this is transgressed, when, out of the vanity of being in every fantastick fashion, we put our selves in such clothing, as either will not defend us from Cold, or is some other way so uneasie, that it is rather a hurt than a benefit to our bodies, to be so clad. This is a most ridiculous folly, and yet that which people that take a pride in their clothes are usually guilty of.

Fencing from Cold.

10. A third end of Apparel is, the Distinguishing or Differencing of Persons; and that, first, in respect of sex; secondly, in respect of qualities. First, clothes are to make a difference of sex: This hath been observed by all nations, the habits of men and women have always been divers. And God himself expresly provided for it among the *Jews*, by commanding that the man should not wear the Apparel of the woman, nor the woman of the man. But then, secondly, There is also a Distinction of qualities to be observed in Apparel; God hath placed some in a higher condition than others, and in

Distinction of Persons

in proportion to their condition it befits their clothing to be: *Gorgeous Apparel*, our Saviour tells us, *is for kings courts*, Luke 7. 25. Now this end of Apparel should also be observed. Men and women should content themselves with that sort of clothing which agrees to their sex and condition, not striving to exceed and equal that of a higher rank, nor yet making it matter of envy among those of their own estate, vying who shall be finest; but let every man clothe himself in such sober attire as befits his place and calling, and not think himself disparaged if another of his neighbours have better than he.

11. And let all remember, that clothes are things which add no true worth to any, and therefore, it is an intolerable vanity to spend any considerable part, either of their thoughts, time, or wealth upon them, or to value themselves ever the more for them, or despise their poor brethren that want them. But if they desire to adorn themselves, let it be, as St. *Peter* adviseth the women of his time, 1 *Pet.* 3. 4. *In the hidden man of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.* Let them clothe themselves as richly as is possible with all Christian virtues, and that is the raiment that will set them out lovely in God's eyes, yea, and in mens too, who, unless they be fools and ideots, will more value thee for being good than fine; and sure, one plain coat thou puttest upon a poor man's back, will better become thee, than twenty rich ones thou shalt put upon thine own.

Too much sparing a Fault, as well as Excess.

12. I have now gone through the several parts of Temperance; I shall now in conclusion add this general caution, That though in all these particulars, I have taken notice only of the one fault of excess, yet it is possible there may be one on the other hand: Men may deny their bodies that which they necessarily require to their support and well-being. This is, I believe, a fault not so common as the other; yet we sometimes see some very niggardly persons that are guilty of it, that cannot find in their hearts to borrow so much from their chests as may fill their bellies, or clothe their backs; and that are so intent upon the world, so moiling and drudging in it, that they cannot afford themselves that competent time of sleep or recreation, that is necessary. If any that hath read the former part of this discourse be of this temper, let him not comfort himself that he is not guilty of those excesses there complained of, and therefore conclude himself a good Christian, because he is not intemperate; for whoever is this covetous creature, his abstaining shall not be counted to him as the virtue of Temperance; for it is not the love of Temperance, but wealth, that makes him refrain, and that is so far from being praise-worthy, that it is that great sin which the Apostle tells us, 1 *Tim.* 6. 10. *Is the root of all evil:* Such a man's body will one day rise in judgment against him, for defrauding it of its due portion, those moderate refreshments and comforts which God hath allowed it. This is an idolatry beyond that of offering the children to *Molech*, Lev. 20. 3. they offered but their children; but this covetous wretch sacrificeth himself to his god Mammon, whilst he often destroys his health, his life, yea, finally, his soul too, to save his purse. I have now done with the second head of duty, that to our selves, contained by the Apostle under the word *Soberly*.

SUNDAY X.

Of Duties to our Neighbour. Of Justice, Negative, Positive. Of the Sin of Murder, of the Heinousness of it, the Punishments of it, and the strange Discoveries thereof. Of Maiming, &c.

Duty to our Neighbour.

Sect. 1. I Come now to the third part of duties, those to our NEIGHBOUR, which are by the Apostle summed up in gross in the word [*Righteousness*] by which is meant not only bare justice, but all kind of charity also; for that is now by the Law of Christ become a debt to our Neighbour, and it is a piece of unrighteousness to defraud him of it. I shall therefore build all the particular Duties we owe to our Neighbour, on those two general ones, Justice and Charity.

Justice.

2. I begin with Justice, whereof there are two parts, the one negative, the other positive: The negative Justice is to do no wrong or injury to any: The positive Justice is to do right to all, that is, to yield them whatsoever appertains, or is due unto them.

Negative.

I shall first speak of the Negative Justice, the not injuring or wronging any.

Now

Now because a man is capable of receiving wrong in several respects, this first part of Justice extends it self into several branches, answerable to those capacities of injury. A man may be injured either in his soul, his body, his possessions, or credit; and therefore this duty of Negative Justice lays a restraint on us in every of these; that we do no wrong to any man, in respect either of his soul, his body, his possessions, or his credit.

3. First, This Justice ties us to do no hurt to his Soul. And here my first work must be to examine what harm it is that the Soul can receive: It is, we know, an invisible substance, which we cannot reach with our eye, much less with our swords and weapons; yet for all that it is capable of being hurt and wounded, and that even to death. *To the Soul.*

4. Now the soul may be considered either in a natural or spiritual Sense; in the natural it signifies that, which we usually call the mind of a man; and this, we all know may be wounded with grief or sadness, as *Solomon* saith, *Prov.* 15. 13. *By sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.* Therefore whoever does causelesly afflict or grieve his Neighbour, he transgresses this part of Justice, and hurts and wrongs his Soul. This sort of injury malicious and spiteful men are very often guilty of, they will do things by which themselves reap no good, nay, often much harm, only that they may vex and grieve another; this is a most savage, inhuman humour, thus to take pleasure in the sadness and afflictions of others; and whoever harbours it in his heart, may truly be said to be possest with a Devil; for it is the nature only of those accursed spirits to delight in the miseries of men; and, till that be cast out, they are fit only to dwell as the possest person did, *Mark* 5. 2. *among graves and tombs*, where there are none capable of receiving affliction by them. *In the natural Sense.*

5. But the soul may be considered also in the spiritual Sense; and so it signifies that immortal part of us, which must live eternally, either in bliss or woe, in another world. And the soul thus understood is capable of two sorts of harm: First, that of sin; secondly, that of punishment; the latter whereof is certainly the consequent of the former; and therefore, though God be the inflicter of punishment, yet since it is but the effect of sin, we may justly reckon, that he that draws a man to sin, is likewise the betrayer of him to punishment, as he that gives a man a mortal wound is the cause of his death; therefore under the evil of sin both are contained, so that I need speak only of that. *In the spiritual.*

6. And sure there cannot be a higher sort of wrong, than the bringing this great evil upon the soul. Sin is the disease and wound of the soul, as being the direct contrary to grace, which is the health and soundness of it. Now this wound we give to every soul, whom we do by any means whatsoever draw into sin. *Drawing to Sin the greatest Injury.*

7. The ways of doing that are divers: I shall mention some of them, whereof though some are more direct than others, yet all tend to the same end. Of the more direct ones there is, first, The commanding of sin, that is, when a person that hath power over another, shall require him to do something which is unlawful, an example of this we have in *Nebuchadnezzar's* commanding the worship of the golden image, *Dan.* 3. 4. and his copy is imitated by any parent or master, who shall require of his child or servant to do any unlawful act. Secondly, There is counselling of sin, when men advise and persuade others to any wickedness: Thus *Job's* wife counselled her husband to curse God, *Job* 2. 9. And *Abithophel* advised *Absalom* to go in to his father's concubines, 2 *Sam.* 16. 21. Thirdly, There is enticing and alluring to sin, by setting before men the pleasures or profits they shall reap by it. Of this sort of enticement *Solomon* gives warning, *Prov.* 1. 10. *My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not; if they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without a cause*, &c. And *ver.* the 13. you may see what is the bait, by which they seek to allure them, *We shall find all precious substance; we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse.* Fourthly, There is assistance in sin, that is, when men aid and help others either in contriving or acting a sin. Thus *Jonadab* helpt *Amnon* in plotting the ravishing of his sister, 2 *Sam.* 13. All these are direct means of bringing this great evil of sin upon our brethren. *Direct Means of it.*

8. There are also others which, though they seem more indirect, may yet be as effectual towards that ill end: As first, example in sin; he that sets others an ill pattern, does his part to make them imitate it, and too often it hath that effect, there being generally nothing more forcible to bring men into any sinful practice, than the seeing it used by others, as might be instanced in many sins, to which there is no other temptation, but their being in fashion. Secondly, There is encouragement in sin, when either by approving, or else at least by not shewing a dislike, we give others confidence *Indirect.*

to go on in their wickedneſs. A third means is by juſtifying and defending any ſinful act of anothers; for by that we do not only confirm him in his evil, but endanger the drawing others to the like, who may be the more inclinable to it, when they ſhall hear it ſo pleaded for. Laſtly, The bringing up any reproach upon ſtrict and Chriſtian living, as thoſe do, who have the ways of God in deriſion; this is a means to affright men from the practice of duty, when they ſee it will bring them to be ſcorned and deſpiſed; this is worſe than all the former, not only in reſpect to the man, who is guilty of it, (as it is an evidence of the great profaneneſs of his own heart) but alſo in regard of others, it having a more general ill effect, than any of the former can have; it being the betraying men, not only to ſome ſingle acts of diſobedience to Chriſt, but even to the caſting off all ſubjection to him; by all theſe means we may draw on our ſelves this great guilt of injuring and wounding the ſouls of our brethren.

Men ought ſadly to conſider whom they have thus injured.

9. It would be too long for me to inſtance in all the ſeveral ſins, in which it is uſual for men to enſnare others, as drunkenneſs, uncleanneſs, rebellion, and a multitude more. But it will concern every man for his own particular, to conſider ſadly what miſchiefs of this kind he hath done to any, by all, or any of theſe means, and to weigh well the greatneſs of the injury. Men are apt to boaſt of their innocency towards their Neighbours, that they have done wrong to no man; but, God knows, many that thus brag, are, of all others, the moſt injurious perſons; perhaps they have not maimed his body, nor ſtoln his goods; but alas! the body is but the caſe and cover of the man, and the goods ſome appurtenances to that; 'tis the ſoul is the man, and that they can wound and pierce without remorſe, and yet with the adultereſs, *Prov.* 30. 20. ſay, *They have done no wickedneſs*; but glory of their friendly behaviour to thoſe whom thus they betray to eternal ruin; for whomſoever thou haſt drawn to any ſin, thou haſt done thy part to aſcertain to thoſe endleſs flames. And then think with thy ſelf how baſe a treachery this is: Thou wouldſt call him a treacherous villain, that ſhould, while he pretends to embrace a man, ſecretly ſtab him; but this of thine is as far beyond that, as the ſoul is of more value than the body, and hell worſe than death. And remember yet farther, that beſides the cruelty of it to thy poor brother, it is alſo moſt dangerous to thy ſelf, it being that againſt which Chriſt hath pronounced a woe, *Matt.* 11. 7. And verſe 6. he tells us, that *Whoever ſhall offend*, (that is, draw into ſin) *any of thoſe little ones, it were better for him that a milſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the ſea.* Thou mayſt plunge thy poor brother into perdition, but as it is with wreſtlers, he that gives another a fall, commonly falls with him, ſo thou art like to bear him company to that place of torment.

Heartily to bewail it.

10. Let therefore thy own and his danger beget in thee a ſenſe of the greatneſs of this ſin, this horrid piece of injuſtice to the precious ſoul of thy Neighbour. Bethink thy ſelf ſeriouſly to whom thou haſt been thus cruel, whom thou haſt enticed to drinking, adviſed to rebellion, allured to luſt, ſtirred up to rage, whom thou haſt aſſiſted or encouraged in any ill courſe, or diſcouraged and diſheartned by thy profane ſcoffings at piety in general, or at any conſcionable ſtrict walking of his in particular; and then draw up a bill of indictment, accuſe and condemn thy ſelf as a *Cain*, a murderer of thy brother, heartily and deeply bewail all thy guilts of this kind, and reſolve never once more to be a ſtumbling-block, as St. *Paul* calls it, *Rom.* 14. in thy brother's way.

Endeavour to repair it.

11. But this is not all, there muſt be ſome fruits of this repentance brought forth: Now in all ſins of injuſtice reſtitution is a neceſſary fruit of repentance, and ſo it is here; thou haſt committed an act (perhaps many) of high injuſtice to the ſoul of thy brother; thou haſt robbed it of its innocency, of its title to heaven; thou muſt now endeavour to reſtore all this to it again, by being more earneſt and induſtrious to win him to repentance, than ever thou wert to draw him to ſin: Uſe now as much art to convince him of the danger, as ever thou didſt to flatter him with the pleaſures of his vice: In a word, countermine thy ſelf by uſing all thoſe methods and means to recover him, that thou didſt to deſtroy him, and be more diligent and zealous in it; for 'tis neceſſary thou ſhouldſt, both in regard of him and thy ſelf. Firſt, In reſpect of him, becauſe there is in man's nature ſo much a greater promptneſs and readineſs to evil than to good, that there will need much more pains and diligence to inſtil the one into him, than the other: Beſides, the man is ſuppoſed to be already accuſtomed to the contrary, which will add much to the difficulty of the work. Then in reſpect of thy ſelf, if thou be a true penitent, thou wilt think thy ſelf obliged, as St. *Paul* did, *to labour more abundantly*, and wilt be aſhamed, that when thou art trading for God, bringing back a ſoul to him, thou ſhouldſt not purſue it with more earneſtneſs, than while thou wert an agent of Satan's; beſides, the remembrance, that thou wert a means of bringing that poor ſoul into this ſnare, muſt neceſſarily quicken thy diligence to get him

him out of it. So much for the first part of Negative Justice, in respect of the souls of our brethren.

12. The second concerns the Bodies; and to those also this Justice binds thee to do no wrong or violence. Now of wrongs to the Body there may be several degrees, the highest of them is killing, taking away the life; this is forbid in the very letter of the sixth Commandment; *Thou shalt do no murder.*

Negative Justice to the Body. In respect of the Life.

13. Murder may be committed, either by open violence, when a man, either by sword, or any other instrument, takes away another's life, immediately and directly; or it may be done secretly and treacherously, as *David* murdered *Uriah*, not with his own sword, but with the sword of the children of *Ammon*, 2 Sam. 11. 17. And *Jezebel Naboth*, by a false accusation, 1 *Kings* 21. 13. And so divers have committed this sin of Murder, by poison, false-witness, or some such concealed ways: The former is commonly the effect of a sudden rage, the latter hath several originals; sometimes it proceeds from some old malice fixed in the heart towards the person; sometimes from some covetous or ambitious desires; such an one stands in a man's way to his profit or preferment, and therefore he must be removed; and sometimes again it is to cover shame, as in the case of strumpets, that murder their infants, that they may not betray their filthiness. But besides these more direct ways of killing, there is another, and that is, when by our persuasions and enticements we draw a man to do that which tends to the shortning of his life, and is apparent to do so; he that makes his neighbour drunk, if by that drunkenness the man comes to any mortal hurt, which he would have escaped if he had been sober, he that made him drunk is not clear of his death; or if he die not by any such sudden accident, yet, if drinking cast him into a disease, and that disease kill him, I know not how he that drew him to that excess, can acquit himself of his Murder in the eyes of God, though human laws touch him not. I wish those, who make it their business to draw in customers to that trade of debauchery, would consider it. There is yet another way of bringing this guilt upon our selves, and that is, by inciting and stirring up others to it, or to that degree of anger and revenge which produces it: And he that sets two persons at variance, or seeing them already so, blows the coals, if Murder ensue, he certainly hath his share in the guilt, which is a consideration that ought to affright all from having any thing to do in the kindling or increasing of contention.

Several ways of being guilty of Murder.

14. Now for the Heinousness of this Sin of Murder, I suppose none can be ignorant that it is of the deepest dye, a most loud crying Sin. This we may see in the first act of this kind that ever was committed, *Abel's* blood crieth from the earth, as God tells *Cain*, Gen. 4. 10. Yea, the guilt of this Sin is such, that it leaves a stain even upon the land where it is committed, such as is not to be washed out, but by the blood of the Murderer, as appears, *Deut.* 19. 12, 13. *The land cannot be purged of blood, but by the blood of him that shed it:* And therefore, though in other cases the flying to the altar secured a man, yet in this of wilful Murder no such refuge was allowed, but such a one was to be taken even thence, and delivered up to justice, *Exod.* 21. 14. *Thou shalt take him from my altar that he may die.* And it is yet further observable, that the only two precepts which the Scripture mentions, as given to *Noah* after the Flood, were both in relation to this Sin, that of not eating blood, *Gen.* 9. 4. being a ceremony to beget in men a greater horror of this Sin of Murder, and so intended for the preventing of it. The other was for the punishment of it, *Gen.* 9. 6. *He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;* and the reason of this strictness is added in the next words, *For in the image of God made he man;* where you see, that this Sin is not only an injury to our brother, but even the highest contempt and despite towards God himself, for it is the defacing of his image, which he hath stamped upon man. Nay, yet further, it is the usurping of God's proper right and authority. For it is God alone that hath right to dispose of the life of man; 'twas he alone that gave it, and it is he alone that hath power to take it away; but he that murders a man, does, as it were, wrest this power out of God's hand, which is the highest pitch of rebellious presumption.

The Heinousness of the Sin.

15. And as the sin is great, so likewise is the Punishment; we see it frequently very great and remarkable even in this world, (besides those most fearful effects of it in the next) blood not only cries, but it cries for vengeance, and the great God of recompences, as he stiles himself, will not fail to hear it: Very many examples the Scripture gives us of this; *Ahab* and *Jezebel*, that murdered innocent *Naboth*, for greediness of his vineyard, were themselves slain, and the dogs licked their blood in the place where they had shed his, as you may read in that story; so *Absalom*, that slew his brother *Amnon*, after he had committed that sin, fell into another, that of rebellion against his king

The great Punishment attending it.

king and father, and in it miserably perished. *Rechab* and *Baanah* that slew *Ishbosheth*, were themselves put to death, and that by the very person they thought to endear by it. Many more instances might be given of this out of the sacred Story, and many also out of human, there having been no age but hath yielded multitudes of examples of this kind, so that every man may furnish himself out of the observations of his own time.

The strange Discoveries of it.

16. And it is worth our notice, what strange and even miraculous means it hath often pleased God to use for the Discovery of this sin; the very brute creatures have often been made instruments of it; nay, often the extreme horror of a man's own conscience, hath made him betray himself: So that it is not any closeness a man uses in the acting of this sin, that can secure him from the vengeance of it; for he can never shut out his own conscience, that will in spite of him be privy to the fact, and that very often proves the means of discovering it to the world; or if it should not do that, yet it will sure act revenge on him, it will be such a hell within him, as will be worse than death: This we have seen in many, who, after the commission of this sin, have never been able to enjoy a minute's rest, but have had that intolerable anguish of mind, that they have chosen to be their own murderers, rather than live in it. These are the usual effects of this sin, even in this world; but those in another are yet more dreadful, where surely the highest degrees of torment belong to this high pitch of wickedness: For if, as our Saviour tells us, *Matt.* 5. 22. hell-fire be the portion of him that shall but call his brother fool, what degree of those burnings can we think proportionable to this so much greater an injury?

We must watch diligently against all Approaches of this Sin.

17. The consideration of all this ought to possess us with the greatest horror and abomination of this sin, and to make us extremely watchful of our selves, that we never fall into it; and to that end, to prevent all those occasions which may insensibly draw us into this pit. I mentioned at first several things, which are wont to be originals of it, and at those we must begin, if we will surely guard our selves. If therefore thou wilt be sure never to kill a man in thy rage, be sure never to be in that rage; for if thou permittest thy self to that, thou canst have no security against the other, anger being a madness that suffers us not to consider, or know what we do, when it has once possest us. Therefore when thou findest thy self begin to be enflamed, think betimes whither this may lead thee, if thou lettest loose to it, and immediately put the bridle upon this headstrong passion: So again, if thou wilt be sure thy malice shall not draw thee to it, be sure never to harbour one malicious thought in thy heart; for if it once settle there, it will gather such strength, that within a while thou wilt be perfectly under the power of it, so that it may lead thee even to this horrible sin at its pleasure: Be therefore careful at the very first approach of this treacherous guest, to shut the doors against it, never to let it enter thy mind: So also, if thou wilt be sure thy covetousness, thy ambition, thy lust, or any other sinful desire, shall not betray thee to it, be sure thou never permit any of them to bear any sway with thee; for if they get the dominion, as they will soon do, if they be once entertained in the heart, they will be past thy controul, and hurry thee to this or any other sin, that may serve their ends. In like manner, if thou wouldst not be guilty of any of the mortal effects of thy neighbour's drunkenness, be sure not to entice him to it, nor accompany him at it; and to that purpose do not allow thy self in the same practice; for if thou do, thou wilt be labouring to get company at it. Lastly, if thou wilt not be guilty of the Murder committed by another, take heed thou never give any encouragement to it, or contribute any thing to that hatred or contention, that may be the cause of it. For when thou hast either kindled or blowed the fire, what knowest thou whom it may consume? Bring always as much water as thou canst to quench, but never bring one drop of oil to increase the flame. The like may be said of all other occasions of this sin not here mentioned; and this careful preserving our selves from these, is the only sure way to keep us from this sin: Therefore, as ever thou wouldst keep thy self innocent from the great offence, guard thee warily from all such in-lets, those steps and approaches towards it.

Maiming a great Injury.

18. But although Murder be the greatest, yet it is not the only injury that may be done to the body of our neighbour; there are others which are also of a very high nature: The next in degree to this is Maiming him, depriving him of any member, or at least of the use of it; and this is a very great wrong and mischief to him, as we may discern by the judgment of God himself, in the case of the bond-servant, who should by his master's means lose a member, *Exod.* 21. 26. the freedom of his whole life was thought but a reasonable recompence for it. *He shall let him go free*, saith the text, *for his eye*; nay, though it were a less considerable part, if it were but a

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tooth, which of all other may be lost with the least damage, yet the same amends was to be made him, *Ver.* 27.

19. But we need no other way of measuring this injury, than the judgment of every man in his own case: How much does every man dread the loss of a limb? so that, if he be by any accident or disease in danger of it, he thinks no pains or cost too much to preserve it. And then how great an injustice, how contrary to that great rule of *doing as we would be done to*, is it for a man to do that to another, which he so unwillingly suffers himself?

That which every Man dreads for himself.

But if the person be poor, one that must labour for his living, the injury is yet greater; it is such as may in effect amount to the former sin of Murder: For, as the wise man says, *Ecclus.* 34. 21. *The poor man's bread is his life, and he that deprives him thereof is a blood-shedder:* And therefore he that deprives him of the means of getting his bread, by disabling him from labour, is surely no less guilty. In the law it was permitted to every man, that had sustained such a damage by his neighbour, to require the magistrate to inflict the like on him, *Eye for eye, tooth for tooth*, as it is, *Exod.* 21. 24.

Yet worse if the Man be poor.

20. And though unprofitable revenge be not now allowed to us Christians, yet sure it is the part of every one, who hath done this injury, to make what Satisfaction lies in his power; 'tis true he cannot restore a limb again (which by the way should make men wary how they do those mischiefs, which it is so impossible for them to repair) but yet he may satisfie for some of the ill effects of that loss. If that have brought the man to want and penury, he may, nay, he must, if he have but the least ability, relieve and support him; yea, though it be by his own extraordinary labour: For, if it be a duty of us all to be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, as *Job* speaks, much more must we be so to them, whom our selves have made blind and lame. Therefore, whoever hath done this injury to any of his poor brethren, let him know he is bound to do all that is possible towards the repairing of it; if he do not, every new suffering, that the poor man's wants bring upon him, becomes a new charge and accusation against him, at the tribunal of the just Judge.

Necessity of making what Satisfaction we can.

21. There are yet other degrees of injury to the body of our neighbour. I shall mention only two more, Wounds and Stripes; a man may wound another, which, though it finally cause loss neither of life nor limb, is yet an endangering of both; and the like may be said of Stripes; both of which however are very painful at the present, nay, perhaps, very long after; and pain, of all temporal evils, is to be accounted the greatest; for it is not only an evil in it self, but it is such an one that permits us not, whilst we are under it, to enjoy any other good, a man in pain having no taste of any the greatest delights. If any man despise these, as light injuries, let him again ask himself, how he would like it, to have his own body flasht or bruised, and put to pass under those painful means of cure, which are many times necessary in such cases? I presume there is no man would willingly undergo this from another, and why then shouldst thou offer it to him?

Wounds and Stripes Injuries also.

22. The truth is, this strange Cruelty to others is the effect of a great Pride and haughtiness of heart: We look upon others with such contempt, that we think it no matter how they are used; we think they must bear blows from us, when in the mean time we are so tender of our selves, that we cannot hear the least word of disparagement, but we are all on a flame. The provocations to these injuries are commonly so slight, that did not this inward Pride dispose us to such an angriness of humour, that we take fire at every thing, it were impossible we should be moved by them. Nay, some are advanced to such a wantonness of Cruelty, that without any provocation at all, in cool blood, as they say, they can thus wrong their poor brethren, and make it part of their pastime and recreatiou to cause pain to others. Thus some tyrannous humours take such a pleasure in tormenting those under their power, that they are glad when they can but find a pretence to punish them, and then do it without all moderation. And others will set men together by the ears, only that they may have the sport of seeing the scuffle, like the old *Romans*, that made it one of their publick sports to see men kill one another; and sure we have as little Christianity as they, if we can take delight in such spectacles.

This Cruelty to others the effect of Pride.

23. This savageness and cruelty of mind is so unbecoming the nature of a man, that he is not allowed to use it, even to his beast; how intolerable is it then towards those that are of the same nature, and, which is more, are heirs of the same eternal hopes with us? They that shall thus transgress against their neighbours in any of the foregoing particulars, or whatever else is hurtful to the body, are unjust persons, want even this lowest sort of justice, the negative, to their neighbours, in respect of their bodies.

24. Neither can any man excuse himself by saying what he had done was only in return of some injury offered him by the other; for suppose it be so, that he had indeed received some considerable wrong, yet cannot he be his own revenger without injury to that man, who is not, by being thine enemy, become thy vassal or slave, to do with him what thou list; thou hast never the more right of dominion over him, because he hath done thee wrong; and therefore if thou hadst no power over his body before, 'tis certain thou hast none now; and therefore thou art not only uncharitable, (which yet were sin enough to damn thee) but unjust in every act of violence thou dost to him. Nay, this injustice ascends higher, even to God himself, who hath reserved vengeance as his own peculiar right, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord,* Rom. 12. 19. And then he that will act revenge for himself, what does he, but incroach upon this special right and prerogative of God, snatch the sword, as it were, out of his hand, as if he knew better how to wield it? Which is at once a robbery and contempt of the Divine Majesty.

SUNDAY XI.

Of Justice about the Possessions of our Neighbour; against injuring him as concerning his Wife, his Goods. Of Oppression, Theft; of paying of Debts, &c.

His Possessions.

Sect. 1. THE Third part of negative Justice concerns the Possessions of our Neighbours: What I mean by Possessions, I cannot better explain than by referring you to the tenth Commandment, the end of which is to bridle all covetous appetites and desires towards the Possessions of our Neighbour. There we find reckoned up not only his house, servants, and cattle, which may all pass under the one general name of his goods or riches, but particularly his wife, as a principal part of his Possessions; and therefore, when we consider this duty of negative Justice, in respect of the Possessions of our Neighbour, we must apply it to both, his wife as well as his goods.

His Wife.

2. The especial and peculiar right that every man hath in his Wife is so well known, that it were vain to say any thing in proof of it; the great impatience that every husband hath to have this right of his invaded, shews, that it is sufficiently understood in the world; and therefore none, that does this injury to another, can be ignorant of the greatness of it. The corrupting of a man's Wife, enticing her to a strange bed, is by all acknowledg'd to be the worst sort of theft, infinitely beyond that of the goods.

The enticing a Man's Wife the greatest Injustice. To the Woman.

3. Indeed there is in this one a heap of the greatest Injustices together, some towards the woman, and some towards the man: Towards the woman there are the greatest imaginable; it is that Injustice to her soul, which was before mentioned as the highest of all others, 'tis the robbing her of her innocency, and setting her in a course of the horridest wickedness (no less than lust and perjury together) from which it is probable she may never return, and then it proves the damning of her eternally. Next, It is in respect of this world the robbing her of her credit, making her abhorred and despised, and her very name a reproach among all men; and besides, it is the depriving her of all that happiness of life, which arises from the mutual kindness and affection that is between man and wife; instead whereof this brings in a loathing and abhorring of each other, from whence flow multitudes of mischiefs, too many to rehearse, in all which the man hath his share also.

To the Man.

4. But besides those, there are to him many and high injustices; for it is first, the robbing him of that, which of all other things he accounts most precious, the love and faithfulness of his wife, and that also wherein he hath such an incommunicable right, that himself cannot, if he wou'd, make it over to any other; and therefore sure it cannot without the utmost injustice be torn from him by any. Nor is this all, but it is further the ingulfing him (if ever he come to discern it) in that most tormenting passion of jealousie, which is of all others the most painful, and which oft puts men upon the most desperate attempts; it being, as *Solomon* says, *Prov. 6. 34. the rage of a man.* It is yet, further, the bringing upon him all that scorn and contempt, which by the unjust measures of the world falls on them which are so abused, and which is by many esteemed the most insufferable part of the wrong; and though it be true, that it is

very unjust he should fall under reproach, only because he is injured; yet unless the world could be new moulded, it will certainly be his lot; and therefore it adds much to the injury. Again, This may indeed be a robbery in the usual sense of the word; for perhaps it may be the thrusting in the child of the adulterer into his family, to share both in the maintenance and portions of his own children: And this is an arrant theft; first, in respect of the man, who surely intends not the providing for another man's child; and then, in respect of the children, who are by that means defrauded of so much as that goes away with. And therefore, whosoever hath this circumstance of the sin to repent of, cannot do it effectually, without restoring to the family as much as he hath by this means robb'd it of.

The most irreparable.

5. All this put together will sure make this the greatest and most provoking injury that can be done to a man, and (which heightens it yet more) it is that, for which a man can never make reparations; for unless it be in the circumstance before-mentioned, there is no part of this sin wherein that can be done; to this purpose, it is observable in the Jewish law, that the thief was appointed to restore four-fold, and that freed him: but the Adulterer, having no possibility of making any restitution, any satisfaction, he must pay his life for his offence, *Lev.* 20. 10. And though now a-days Adulterers speed better, live many days to renew their guilt, and perhaps to laugh at those, whom they have thus injured, yet let them be assured, there must one day be a sad reckoning, and that, whether they repent or not; if by God's grace they do come to repentance, they will then find this to be no cheap sin; many anguishes of soul, terrors and perplexities of conscience, groans and tears it must cost them; and indeed were a man's whole life spent in these penitential exercises, 'twere little enough to wipe off the guilt of any one single act of this kind. What overwhelming sorrows then are requisite for such a trade of this sin, as too many drive? Certainly it is so great a task, that it is highly necessary for all that are so concerned, to set to it immediately, lest they want time to go through with it: For let no man flatter himself, that the guilt of a course and habit of such a sin can be washt away with a single act of repentance: No, he must proportion the repentance to the fault, and as one hath been a habit and course, so must the other also. And then how strange a madness is it for men to run into this sin, and that with such painful pursuits (as many do) which he knows must, at the best hand, that is, supposing he do repent of it, cost him thus dear? But then, if he do not repent, infinitely dearer: It loses him all his title to heaven, that place of purity, and gives him his portion in the lake of fire, where the burnings of his lust shall end in those everlasting burnings; for how closely soever he hath acted this sin, be it so that he may have said with the Adulterer in *Job* 24. 15. *No eye seeth me*, yet 'tis sure he could not in the greatest obscurity shelter himself from God's sight, with whom *the darkness is no darkness*, Psal. 139. 12. And he it is, who hath expresly threatned to judge this sort of offenders, *Heb.* 13. 4. *Adulterers God will judge.* God grant that all that live in this foul guilt, may so seasonably, and so throughly judge themselves, that they may prevent that severe and dreadful judgment of his.

His Goods.

6. The second thing, to which this negative justice to our neighbour's possessions reacheth, is his Goods; under which general word is contained all those several sorts of things, as house, land, cattle, money, and the like, in which he hath a right and property: These we are by the rule of this justice to suffer him to enjoy, without seeking either to work him damage in any of them, or to get any of them to our selves: I make a difference between these two, because there may be two several grounds or motives of this injustice, the one malice, the other covetousness.

Malicious Injustice.

7. The malicious man desires to work his neighbours mischief, though he get nothing by it himself: 'Tis frequently seen, that men will make havock and spoil of the Goods of one, to whom they bear a grudge, though they never design to get any thing to themselves by it, but only the pleasure of doing a spite to the other. This is a most hellish humour, directly answerable to that of the Devil, who bestows all his pains and industry, not to bring in any good to himself, but only to ruin and undo others; and how contrary it is to all rules of justice, you may see by the precept given by God to the *Jews*, concerning the goods of an enemy; where they were so far from being allowed a liberty of spoil and destruction, that they are expresly bound to prevent it, *Exod.* 23. 4, 5. *If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again: If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him:* Where you see it is a debt we owe to our very enemies, to prevent that loss and damage, which by any accident he is in danger of, and that even with some labour and pains to our selves.

How horrible an injustice is it then, purposely to bring that loss and damage on him? Whoever is guilty of this, let him never excuse himself by saying, he hath not enricht himself by the spoil of his neighbour, that he hath nothing of it cleaves to his finger; for sure this malicious injustice is no less a fault than the covetous one; nay, I suppose, in respect of the principle and cause, from which it flows, it may be greater, this hatred of another being worse than the immoderate love of our selves. Whoever hath thus mischieved his neighbour, he is as much bound to repair the injury, to make satisfaction for the loss, as if he had enricht himself by it.

Covetous Injustice.

8. But on the other side, let not the covetous defrauder therefore judge his sin light, because there is another, that in some one respect outweighs it; for perhaps in others his may cast the scales; certainly it does in this one, that he that is unjust for greediness of gain, is like to multiply more acts of this sin, than he that is so out of malice; for it is impossible any man should have so many objects of his malice, as he may have of his covetousness. There is no man at so general a defiance with all mankind, that he hates every body; but the covetous man hath as many objects of his vice, as there be things in the world he counts valuable. But I shall not longer stand upon this comparison; 'tis sure they are both great and crying sins; and that is ground enough of abhorring each. Let us descend now to the several branches of this sort of covetous Injustice; 'tis true they may all bear the name of robbery or theft, for in effect they are all so; yet for method sake, it will not be amiss to distinguish them into these three, oppression, theft, and deceit.

Oppression.

9. By Oppression I mean that open and bare-faced robbery of seizing upon the possessions of others, and owning and avowing the doing so. For the doing of this there are several instruments; as first, that of power, by which many nations and princes have been turned out of their rights, and many private men out of their estates; sometimes again, law is made the instrument of it; he that covets his neighbour's lands or goods, pretends a claim to them, and then by corrupting of justice, by bribes and gifts, or else over-ruling it by greatness and authority, gets judgment on his side; this is a high Oppression, and of the worst sort, thus to make the law, which was intended for the protection and defence of mens rights, to be the means of overthrowing them; and it is a very heavy guilt that lies both on him that procures, and on him that pronounceth such a sentence, yea, and on the lawyer too, that pleads such a cause; for by so doing, he assists in the Oppression. Sometimes again the very necessities of the oppressed are the means of his Oppression: Thus it is in the case of extortion, and griping usury, a man is in extreme want of money, and this gives opportunity to the extortioner to wrest unconscionably from him, to which the poor man is forced to yield, to supply his present wants: And thus also it is often with exacting landlords, who, when their poor tenants know not how to provide themselves elsewhere, rack and skrew them beyond the worth of the thing. All these, and many the like, are but several ways of acting this one sin of Oppression, which becomes yet the more heinous, by how much the more helpless the person is that is thus oppressed: Therefore the Oppression of the widow and fatherless is in Scripture mentioned as the height of this sin.

God's Vengeance against it.

10. It is indeed a most crying guilt, and that against which God hath threatned his heavy Vengeance, as we read in divers texts of Scripture; thus it is, *Ezek.* 18. 12. *He that hath oppressed the poor, and hath spoiled by violence, he shall surely die, his blood shall be upon him:* And the same sentence is repeated against him, *Ver.* 18. Indeed God hath so peculiarly taken upon him the protection of the poor and oppressed, that he is engaged, as it were, in honour to be their avenger, and accordingly, *Psal.* 12. we see God solemnly declare his resolution of appearing for them, *Ver.* 5. *For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord, I will set him in safety from him.* The advice therefore of *Solomon* is excellent, *Prov.* 22. 22. *Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate, for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them;* they are like in the end to have little joy of the booty it brings them in, when it thus engages God against them.

Theft.

11. The second sort of this injustice is Theft; and of that also there are two kinds, the one the with-holding what we should pay, and the other taking from our neighbour what is already in his possession.

Not paying what we borrow.

12. Of the first sort is the not paying of debts, whether such as we have borrowed, or such as by our own voluntary promise are become our debts, for they are equally due to him that can lay either of these claims to them; and therefore the with-holding of either of them is a theft, a keeping from my neighbour that which is his; yet the

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former of them is rather the more injurious, for by that I take from him, that which he once actually had (be it money, or whatever else) and so make him worse than I found him. This is a very great and very common injustice. Men can now-a-days with as great confidence deny him that asks a debt, as they do him that asks an alms; nay, many times it is made matter of quarrel for a man to demand his own: Besides, the many attendances the creditor is put to, in pursuit of it, are a yet further injury to him, by wasting his time, and taking him off from other business; and so he is made a loser that way too. This is so great injustice, that I see not how a man can look upon any thing he possesses as his own right, whilst he thus denies another his. It is the duty of every man in debt, rather to strip himself of all, and cast himself again naked upon God's providence, than thus to feather his nest with the spoils of his neighbours: And surely it will prove the more thriving course, not only in respect of the blessing which may be expected upon justice, compared with the curse that attends the contrary, but even in worldly prudence also; for he that defers paying of debts, will at last be forced to it by law, and that upon much worse terms, than he might have done it voluntarily, with a greater charge, and with such a loss of his credit, that afterward, in his greatest necessities, he will not know where to borrow. But the sure way for a man to secure himself from the guilt of this injustice, is never to borrow more than he knows he hath means to repay, unless it be of one, who knowing his disability, is willing to run the hazard. Otherwise he commits this sin at the very time of borrowing, for he takes that from his neighbour upon promise of paying, which he knows he is never likely to restore to him, which is a flat robbery.

What we are bound for.

The same justice, which ties men to pay their own debts, ties also every surety to pay those debts of others, for which he stands bound, in case the principal either cannot or will not: For, by being bound, he hath made it his own debt, and must in all justice answer it to the creditor, who, it's presumed, was drawn to lend on confidence of his security, and therefore is directly cheated and betrayed by him, if he see him not satisfied. If it be thought hard, that a man should pay for that which he never received benefit by, I shall yield it, so far as to be just matter of wariness to every man, how he enter into such engagements, but it can never be made an excuse for the breaking them.

What we have promised.

As for the other sort of debt, that which is brought upon a man by his own voluntary Promise, that also cannot without great injustice be with-holden; for it is now the man's right, and then 'tis no matter by what means it came to be so. Therefore we see *David* makes it part of the description of a just man, *Psal.* 15. 4. that he keeps his promises, yea, *though they were made to his own disadvantage;* And surely, he is utterly unfit to ascend to that holy hill there spoken of, either as that signifieth the Church here, or Heaven hereafter, that does not punctually observe this part of justice. To this sort of debt may be reduced the wages of the servant, the hire of the labourer; and the with-holding of these is a great sin, and the complaints of those that are thus injured, ascend up to God, *Behold* (saith St. *James*) *the hire of the labourers, which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entred into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.* Deut. 24. 14, 15. we find a strict command in this matter, *Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy; at this day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it, lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.* This is one of those loud clamorous sins, which will not cease crying 'till it bring down God's vengeance: And therefore, though thou hast no justice to thy poor brother, yet have at least so much mercy to thy self, as not to pull down judgments on thee by thus wronging him.

SUNDAY XII.

Of Theft; Stealing; Of Deceit in Trust; in Traffick; of Restitution, &c.

Stealing the Goods of our Neighbour.

Sect. 1. THE Second part of Theft, is the taking from our Neighbour that which is already in his possession: And this may be done, either more violently and openly, or else more closely and slily; the first is the manner of those that rob on the way, or plunder houses, where by force they take the Goods of their Neighbour; the other is the way of the pilfering thief, that takes away a man's Goods unknown to him.

him. I shall not dispute which of these is the worst; 'tis enough that they are both such acts of injustice, as make men odious to God, unfit for human society, and betray the actors to the greatest mischiefs, even in this world, death it self being by law appointed the reward of it; and there are few, that follow this trade long, but at last meet with that fruit of it. I am sure 'tis madness for any to believe he shall always steal securely; for he is to contend with the industry of all those, whom he shall thus injure, whose losses will quicken their wits for the finding him out; and, which is infinitely more, he is to struggle with the justice of God, which doth usually pursue such men to destruction, even in this world; witness the many strange discoveries that have been made of the craftiest thieves. But however, if he were secure from the vengeance here, I am sure nothing but repentance and reformation can secure him from the vengeance of it hereafter. And now, when these dangers are weighed, 'twill sure appear, that the thief makes a pitiful bargain; he steals his Neighbour's money or cattle, and in exchange for it, he must pay his life or his soul, perhaps both; *and if the whole world be too mean a price for a soul*, as he tells us, *Mark* 8. 36. who best knew the value of them, having himself bought them, what a strange madness is it, to barter them away for every petty trifle, as many do, who have got such a habit of Stealing, that not the meanest worthless thing can escape their fingers? Under this head of Theft, may be ranked the receivers of stoln Goods, whether those that take them, as partners in the Theft, or those that buy them, when they know or believe they are stoln. This many (that pretend much to abhor Theft) are guilty of, when they can by it buy the thing a little cheaper than the common rate. And here also comes in the concealing of any Goods a man finds of his Neighbour's, which whosoever restores not, if he know or can learn out the owner, is no better than a thief; for he with-holds from his Neighbour that which properly belongs to him: And sure 'twill not be uncharitable to say, that he that will do this, would likewise commit the grosser Theft, were he by that no more in danger of law, than in this he is.

Deceit. The third part of injustice is Deceit; and in that there may be as many acts, as there are occasions of intercourse and dealing between man and man.

2. It were impossible to name them all, but I think they will be contained under these two general Deceits; in matters of trust, and in matters of traffick or bargaining, unless it be that of gaming, which therefore, here by the way I must tell you, is as much a fraud and deceit as any of the rest.

In Trust. 3. He that deceives a man in any Trust that is committed to him, is guilty of a great injustice, and that the most treacherous sort of one: It is the joining of two great sins in one, defrauding, and promise-breaking; for in all Trusts there is a promise implied, if not exprest; for the very accepting of the Trust, contains under it a promise of fidelity: These Trusts are broken sometimes to the living, sometimes to the dead; to the living there are many ways of doing it, according to the several kinds of the Trust; sometimes a Trust is more general, like that of *Potiphar* to *Joseph*, Gen. 39. 4. a man commits to another all that he hath; and thus guardians of children, and sometimes stewards are intrusted: Sometimes again it is more limited nd restrained to some one special thing; A man intrusts another to bargain or deal for him in such a particular, or he puts some one thing into his hands to manage and dispose: Thus among servants it is usual for one to be intrusted with one part of the master's goods, and another with another part of them. Now in all these, and the like cases, whosoever acts not for him that intrusts him, with the same faithfulness that he would for himself, but shall either carelesly lose, or prodigally imbezle, the things committed to him, or else convert them to his own use, he is guilty of this great sin of betraying a Trust to the living. In like manner, he that being intrusted with the execution of a dead man's testament, acts not according to the known intention of the dead man, but enriches himself by what is assign'd to others, he is guilty of this sin, in respect of the dead, which is so much the greater, by how much the dead hath no means of remedy and redress, as the living may have. It is a kind of robbing of graves, which is a Theft, of which men naturally have such a horror, that he must be a very hardned thief that can attempt it. But either of these frauds are made yet more heinous, when either God or the poor are immediately concerned in it, that is, when any thing is committed to a man, for the uses either of piety or charity; this adds sacrilege to both the fraud and the treachery, and so gives him title to all those curses that attend those several sins, which are so heavy, that he that for the present gain will adventure on them, makes as ill, nay, a much worse bargain than *Gehazi*, 2 Kings 5. 27. who by getting the raiment of *Naaman*, got his leprosie too.

4. The

In Traffick.

4. The second sort of fraud is in matters of Traffick and Bargain, wherein there may be Deceit both in the seller and buyer; that of the seller is commonly either in concealing the faults of the commodity, or else in over-rating it.

The Seller's concealing the Faults of his Ware.

5. The ways of concealing its faults are ordinarily these, either first, by denying that it hath any such fault; nay, perhaps, commending it for the direct contrary quality; and this is downright lying, and so adds that sin to the other; and if that lye be confirmed by an oath, as it is too usually, then the yet greater guilt of perjury comes in also; and then what a heap of sins is here gathered together? abundantly enough to sink a poor soul to destruction, and all this only to skrew a little more money out of his neighbour's pocket, and that sometimes so very little, that 'tis a miracle that any man that thinks he has a soul, can set it at so miserable and contemptible a price. A second means of concealing is by using some art to the thing, to make it look fair, and to hide the faults of it; and this is acting a lye, though it be not speaking one, which amounts to the same thing, and has surely in this case as much of the intention of cheating and defrauding, as the most impudent forswearing can have. A third means is the picking out ignorant chapmen; this is, I believe, an art too well known among tradesmen, who will not bring out their faulty wares to men of skill, but keep them to put off to such, whose unskilfulness may make them passable with them; and this is still the same deceit with the former; for it all tends to the same end, the cozening and defrauding of the chapman, and then it is not much odds, whether I make use of my own art or his weakness for the purpose. This is certain, he that will do justly, must let his chapman know what he buys; and if his own skill enable him not to judge, nay, if he do not actually find out the fault, thou art bound to tell it him, otherwise thou makest him pay for somewhat which is not there, he presuming there is that good quality in it, which thou knowest is not: And therefore thou mayest as honestly take his money for some goods of another man's, which thou knowest thou canst never put into his possession, which I suppose no man will deny to be an arrant cheat. To this head of concealment may be referred that deceit of false weights and measures; for that is the concealing from the buyer a defect in the quantity, as the other was in the quality of the commodity, and is again the making him pay for what he hath not. This sort of fraud is pointed at particularly by *Solomon*, Prov. 11. 1. with this note upon it, *That it is an abomination to the Lord.*

His over-rating it.

6. The second part of fraud in the Seller, lies in over-rating the commodity; though he have not disguised or concealed the faults of it, and so have dealt fairly in that respect, yet if he set an unreasonable price upon it, he defrauds the buyer: I call that an unreasonable price, which exceeds the true worth of the thing, considered with those moderate gains, which all tradesmen are presumed to be allowed in the sale: Whatever is beyond this, must in all likelihood be fetcht in by some of these ways; as first, by taking advantage of the buyer's ignorance in the value of the thing, which is the same with doing it in the goodness, which hath already been shewn to be a deceit: Or secondly, by taking advantage of his necessity; thou findest a man hath present and urgent need of such a thing, and therefore takest this opportunity to set the dice upon him, but this is that very sin of extortion, and oppression spoken of before; for it is sure nothing can justly raise the price of any thing, but either its becoming dearer to thee, or its being some way better in it self: But the necessity of thy brother causes neither of these; his nakedness doth not make the clothes thou sellest him stand thee in ever the more, neither doth it make them any way better; and therefore to rate them ever the higher, is to change the way of trading, and sell even the wants and necessities of thy neighbour, which sure is a very unlawful vocation: Or, thirdly, it may be by taking advantage of the indiscretion of the chapman: A man perhaps earnestly fancies such a thing, and then suffers that fancy so to over-rule his reason, that he resolves to have it upon any terms. If thou findest this in him, and thereupon raisest thy rate, this is to make him buy his folly, which is of all others the dearest purchase; 'tis sure his fancy adds nothing to the real value, no more than his necessity did in the former case, and therefore should not add to the price. He therefore that will deal justly in the business of selling, must not catch at all advantages, which the temper of his chapman may give, but consider soberly what the thing is worth, and what he would afford it for to another, of whom he had no such advantage, and accordingly rate it to him at no higher a price.

Fraud in the Buyer.

7. On the Buyer's part there are not ordinarily so many opportunities of Fraud; yet it is possible a man may sometimes happen to sell somewhat, the worth whereof he is not acquainted with, and then it will be as unjust for the Buyer to make gain by his ignorance, as in the other case it was for the seller; but that which often falls out, is the

case

case of necessity, which may as probably fall on the seller's side, as the Buyer's: A man's wants compel him to sell, and permit him not to stay to make the best bargain, but force him to take the first offer; and here for the Buyer to grate upon him, because he sees him in that strait, is the same fault which I before shewed it to be in the seller.

Many Temptations to Deceit in Traffick. 8. In this whole business of Traffick, there are so many opportunities of Deceit, that a man had need fence himself with a very firm resolution, nay, love of justice, or he will be in danger to fall under Temptation; for, as the wise man speaks, *Ecclus.* 27. 2. *As a nail sticks fast between the joinings of the stones*, so doth sin stick close between buying and selling; it is so interwoven with all trades, so mixt with the very first principles and grounds of them, that it is taught together with them, and so becomes part of the art; so that he is now-a-days scarce thought fit to manage a trade that wants it; while he that hath most of this black art of defrauding, applauds and hugs himself; nay, perhaps, boasts to others, how he hath over-reacht his neighbour.

The commonness of Injustice, a Reproach to Christianity. What an intolerable shame is this, that we Christians, who are, by the precepts of our Master, set to those higher duties of charity, should, instead of practising them, quite unlearn those common rules of justice, which mere nature teaches? For, I think, I may say, there are none of those several branches of Injustice, towards the possessions of our neighbour, which would not be adjudged to be so by any sober Heathen; so that as St. *Paul* tells those of the circumcision, that the Name of God *was blasphemed among the Gentiles*, by that unagreeableness that was betwixt their practice and their law, *Rom.* 2. 24. so now may it be said of us, That the *Name of Christ is blasphemed among the Turks and Heathens*, by the vile and scandalous lives of us, who call our selves Christians, and particularly in this sin of Injustice: For shame, let us at last endeavour to wipe off this reproach from our profession, by leaving these practices to which, methinks, this one single consideration should be enough to persuade us.

It is not the way to enrich a man. 9. Yet besides this, there want not other; among which, one there is of such a nature as may prevail with the arrantest worldling; that is, that this course doth not really tend to the enriching of him: There is a secret curse goes along with it, which like a canker, eats out all the benefit was expected from it. This no man can doubt that believes the Scripture, where there are multitudes of texts to this purpose: Thus *Prov.* 22. 16. *He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, shall surely come to want.* So *Habbak.* 2. 6. *Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? And he that ladeth himself with thick clay: shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee? and awake that shall vex thee? and thou shalt be for booties to them.* This is commonly the fortune of those that spoil and deceive others, they at last meet with some that do the like to them. But the place in *Zechary* is most full to this purpose, Chap. 5. where, under the sign of a flying roll, is signified the curse that goes forth against this sin, ver. 4. *I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of Hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsly by my Name: and it shall consume it with the timber thereof, and with the stones thereof.* Where you see, theft and perjury are the two sins against which this curse is aimed, (and they too often go together in the matter of defrauding) and the nature of this curse is, to consume the house, to make an utter destruction of all that belongs to him that is guilty of either of these sins. Thus whilst thou art ravening after thy neighbour's goods or house, thou art but gathering fuel to burn thine own. And the effect of these threatnings of God we daily see in the strange improsperousness of ill-gotten estates: Which every man is apt enough to observe in other mens cases. He that sees his neighbour decline in his estate, can presently call to mind, this was gotten by oppression or deceit; yet so sottish are we, so bewitcht with the love of gain, that he that makes this observation, can seldom turn it to his own use, is never the less greedy, or unjust himself, for that vengeance he discerns upon others.

It ruins the Soul eternally. 10. But alas! if thou could be sure that thy unjust possessions should not be torn from thee, yet when thou remembrest how dear thou must pay for them in another world, thou hast little reason to brag of thy prize. Thou thinkest thou hast been very cunning, when thou hast over-reacht thy brother; but God knows all the while there is another over-reaching thee, and cheating thee of what is infinitely more precious, even thy Soul: The Devil herein deals with thee as fishers use to do; those that will catch a great fish, will bait the hook with a less, and so the great one coming with greediness to devour that, is himself taken. So thou, that art gaping to swallow up thy poor brother, art thy self made a prey to that great devourer. And alas! what will it ease thee in hell, that thou hast left wealth behind thee upon earth, when thou shalt there

want that which the meanest beggar here enjoys, even a drop of water to cool thy tongue? Consider this, and from henceforth resolve to employ all that pains and diligence thou hast used to deceive others, in rescuing thy self from the frauds of the grand deceiver.

The Necessity of Restitution.

11. To this purpose it is absolutely necessary that thou make Restitution to all whom thou hast wronged: For as long as thou keepest any thing of the unjust gain, 'tis as it were an earnest peny from the Devil, which gives him full right to thy soul. But perhaps it may be said, it will not in all cases be possible to make Restitution to the wronged party, peradventure he may be dead; in that case then make it to his heirs, to whom his right descends. But it may further be objected, that he that hath long gone on in a course of fraud, may have injured many that he cannot now remember, and many that he hath no means of finding out: In this case all I can advise is this; first, to be as diligent as is possible both in recalling to mind who they were, and endeavouring to find them out; and when, after all thy care, that proves impossible, let thy Restitutions be made to the poor; and that they may not be made by halfs, be as careful as thou canst to reckon every the least mite of unjust gain: But when that cannot exactly be done, as 'tis sure it cannot by those, who have multiplied the acts of fraud, yet even there let them make some general measures, whereby to proportion their Restitution: As for example, a tradesman, that cannot remember how much he hath cheated in every single parcel, yet may possibly guess in the gross, whether he have usually over-reacht to the value of a third or a fourth part of the wares, and then what proportion soever he thinks he has so defrauded, the same proportion let him now give out of that estate he hath raised by his trade: But herein it concerns every man to deal uprightly, as in the presence of God, and not to make advantage of his own forgetfulness, to the cutting short of the Restitution, but rather go on the other hand, and be sure rather to give too much, than too little. If he do happen to give somewhat over, he need not grudge the charge of such a sin-offering; and 'tis sure he will not, if he do heartily desire an atonement. Many other difficulties there may be in this business of Restitution, which will not be foreseen, and so cannot now be particularly spoke to; but the more of those there are, the greater horror ought men to have of running into the sin of injustice, which it will be so difficult, if not impossible, for them to repair, and the more careful ought they to be to mortifie that which is the root of all injustice, to wit, covetousness.

SUNDAY XIII.

Of False Reports, False Witness, Slanders, Whisperings; of Scoffing for Infirmities, Calamities, Sins, &c. Of Positive Justice, Truth. Of Lying. Of Envy and Detraction. Of Gratitude, &c.

His Credit.

Sect. 1. THE Fourth branch of negative justice concerns the Credit of our neighbours, which we are not to lessen or impair by any means, particularly not by false Reports. Of False Reports there may be two sorts; the one is when a man says something of his neighbour, which he directly knows to be false; the other, when possibly he has some slight surmise or jealousie of the thing, but that upon such weak grounds, that 'tis as likely to be false as true: In either of these cases, there is a great guilt lies upon the Reporter. That there doth so in the first of them, no body will doubt, every one acknowledging, that it is the greatest baseness to invent a lye of another; but there is as little reason to question the other; for he that reports a thing as a truth, which is but uncertain, is a lyar also; or if he do not report it as a certainty, but only as a probability, yet then, though he be not guilty of the lye, yet he is of the injustice of robbing his neighbour of his Credit; for there is such an aptness in men to believe ill of others, that any the lightest jealousie will, if once it be spread abroad, serve for that purpose: And sure it is a most horrible injustice upon every slight surmise and fancy to hazard the bringing so great an evil upon another, especially, when it is considered, that those surmises commonly spring rather from some censoriousness, peevishness, or malice in the surmiser, than from any real fault in the person so suspected.

False Witness. 2. The manner of spreading these false reports of both kinds, is not always the same; sometimes it is more open and avowed, sometimes more close and private: The open is many times by false Witness before the courts of justice; and this not only hurts a man in his credit, but in other respects also; 'tis the delivering him up to the punishment of the law, and according to the nature of the crime pretended, does him more or less mischief; but if it be of the highest kind, it may concern his life, as we see it did in *Naboth*'s case, 1 *Kings* 21. How great and crying a sin it is in this respect, as also in that of the perjury, you may learn from what hath been said of both those sins. I am now to consider it only as it touches the credit, and to that it is a most grievous wound, thus to have a crime publickly witnessed against one, and such as is scarce curable by any thing that can afterwards be done to clear him; and therefore whoever is guilty of this, doth a most outragious injustice to his neighbour: This is that which is expresly forbidden in the ninth Commandment, and was by God appointed to be punished by the inflicting of the very same suffering upon him, which his false testimony aimed to bring upon the other, *Deut.* 19. 19.

Publick Slanders. 3. The second open way of spreading these reports, is by a publick and common declaring of them, though not before the magistrate, as in the other case, yet in all companies, and before such as are likely to carry it farther; and this is usually done with bitter railings and reproaches, it being an ordinary art of Slanderers, to revile those whom they slander, that so by the sharpness of the accusation, they may have the greater impression on the minds of the hearers: This, both in respect of the Slander and the railing, is a high injury, and both of them such as debar the committers from heaven. Thus *Psal.* 15. where the upright man is described that shall have his part there, this is one special thing, *Ver.* 3. *that he slandereth not his neighbour.* And for railing, the Apostle in several places reckons it amongst those works of the flesh, which are to shut men out both from the Church here by excommunication, as you may see, 1 *Cor.* 15. 11. and from the Kingdom of God hereafter, as it is, 1 *Cor.* 6. 10.

Whispering. 4. The other more close and private way of spreading such reports is that of the Whisperer, he that goes about from one to another, and privately vents his slanders, not out of an intent by that means to make them less publick, but rather more; this trick of delivering them by way of secret, being the way to make them both more believed, and more spoken of too; for he that receives such a tale as a secret from one, thinks to please somebody else, by delivering it as a secret to him also; and so it passes from one hand to another, 'till at last it spreads over a whole town. This sort of slanderer is of all others the most dangerous, for he works in the dark, ties all he speaks to not to own him as the author; so that whereas in the more publick accusations, the party may have some means of clearing himself, and detecting his accuser, here he shall have no possibility of that; the slander, like a secret poison, works incurable effects before ever the man discern it. This sin of Whispering is by St. *Paul* mentioned among those great crimes, which are the effects of a reprobate mind, *Rom.* 1. 29. It is indeed one of the most incurable wounds of this sword of the tongue, the very bane and pest of human society, and that which not only robs single persons of their good names, but oftentimes whole families, nay, publick societies of men, of their peace: What ruins, what confusions hath this one sin wrought in the world? 'Tis *Solomon*'s observation, *Prov.* 17. 9. that a *Whisperer separateth chief friends*, and sure one may truly say of tongues thus employed, that they are *set on fire of hell*, as St. *James* saith, *Chap.* 3. 6.

Several Steps towards this Sin. 5. This is such a guilt, that we are to beware of all the degrees of approach to it, of which there are several Steps: The first is the giving ear to, and cherishing of those that come with slanders; for they that entertain and receive them, encourage them in the practice; for as our common proverb says, *If there were no receivers, there would be no thief;* So, if there were none that would give an ear to tales, there would be no tale-bearers. A second Step is, the giving too easie credit to them, for this helps them to attain part of their end. They desire to get a general ill opinion of such a man, but the way of doing it, must be by causing it first in particular men; and if thou suffer them to do it in thee, they have so far prospered in their aim: And for thy own part, thou dost a great injustice to thy neighbour, to believe ill of him without a just ground, which the accusation of such a person certainly is not. A third Step is the reporting to others what is thus told thee; by which thou makest thy self directly a party in the slander, and after thou hast unjustly withdrawn from thy neighbour thy own good opinion, endeavourest to rob him also of that of others. This is very little below the guilt of the first Whisperer, and tends as much to the ruin of our neighbour's

Credit. And these several degrees have so close a dependance one upon another, that it will be very hard for him that allows himself the first, to escape the other; and indeed he that can take delight to hear his neighbour defamed, may well be presumed of so malicious a humour, that 'tis not likely he should stick at spreading the slander. He therefore that will preserve his innocence in this matter, must never in the least degree cherish or countenance any that brings these false reports. And it is not less necessary to his peace, than to his innocency: For he that once entertains them, must never expect quiet, but shall be continually incited, and stirred up even against his nearest and dearest relations; so that this Whisperer and Slanderer is to be lookt on by all as a common enemy, he being so as well to those to whom, as of whom he speaks.

6. But besides this grosser way of slandering, there is another, whereby we may impair and lessen the credit of our neighbour; and that is by Contempt and Despising; one common effect whereof is Scoffing and Deriding him. This is very injurious to a man's reputation: For the generality of men do rather take up opinions upon trust than judgment; and therefore if they see a man despised and scorn'd, they will be apt to do the like. But besides this effect of it, there is a present injustice in the very act of Despising and Scorning others. There are ordinarily but three things which are made the occasions of it (unless it be with such with whom virtue and godliness are made the most reproachful things; and such Despising is not only an injury to our neighbour, but even to God himself, for whose sake it is that he is so despised) those three are, first, the infirmities, secondly, the calamities, thirdly, the sins of a man; and each of these are very far from being a ground of our triumphing over him. *Despising and Scoffing.*

7. First, for Infirmities, be they either of body or mind, the deformity and unhandsomness of the one, or the weakness and folly of the other, they are things out of his power to help; they are not his faults, but the wise dispensations of the great Creator, who bestows the excellencies of body and mind as he pleases; and therefore to scorn a man because he hath them not, is, in effect, to reproach God, who gave them not to him. *For Infirmities.*

8. So also for the Calamities and Miseries that befal a man, be it want, or sickness, or whatever else; these also come by the providence of God, who raiseth up, and pulleth down, as seems good to him, and it belongs not to us to judge what are the motives to him to do so, as many do, who upon any affliction that befals another, are presently concluding, that sure it is some extraordinary guilt which pulls this upon him, though they have no particular to lay to his charge. This rash judgment our Saviour reproves in the *Jews*, Luke 13. where, on occasion of the extraordinary sufferings of the *Galileans*, he asks them, *Ver.* 2, 3. *Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* When we see God's hand heavy upon others, it is no part of our business to judge them, but our selves, and by repentance to prevent what our own sins have deserved. But to reproach and revile any that are in affliction, is that barbarous cruelty taken notice of by the Psalmist, as the height of wickedness, *Psal. 69. 26. They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of them whom thou hast wounded.* In all the miseries of others compassion becomes a debt to them: How unjust are they then, that instead of paying them that debt, afflict them with scorn and reproach? *For Calamities.*

9. Nay, the very Sins of men, though, as they have more of their wills in them, they may seem more to deserve reproach, yet certainly they also oblige us to the former duty of compassion, and that in the highest degree, as being the things which of all others make a man the most miserable. In all these cases, if we consider how subject we are to the like our selves, and that it is only God's mercy to us, by which we are preserved from the worst that any man else is under, it will surely better become us to look up to him with thankfulness, than down on them with contempt and despising. Thus you see the direct injustice of scorning and contemning our brethren; to which, when that other is added, which naturally follows as a consequent of this, to wit, the begetting the like contempt in others, there can sure be no doubt of its being a great and horrible injustice to our neighbour in respect of his credit. *For Sins.*

10. Now how great the Injury of destroying a man's Credit is, may be measured by these two things; first, the value of the thing he is robbed of; and, secondly, the difficulty of making reparations. For the first, 'tis commonly known that a man's good name is a thing he holds most precious, oftentimes dearer than his life, as we see by the hazards men sometimes run to preserve even a mistaken reputation; but 'tis sure, it is that which hath even by sober men been esteemed one of the greatest happinesses of life; And to some sort of men, such especially as subsist by dealings in the world, 'tis *Destroying the Credit a great Injury.*

so necessary, that it may well be reckoned as the means of their livelihood; and then sure, 'tis no slight matter to rob a man of what is thus valuable to him.

and irreparable. 11. Secondly, The difficulty of making reparations increaseth the injury; and that is such in this case of defamation, that I may rather call it an impossibility, than a difficulty. For when men are possest of an ill opinion of a person, 'tis no easie matter to work it out; so that the slanderer is herein like a young conjurer, that raises a Devil he knows not how to lay again. Nay, suppose men were generally as willing to lay down ill conceits of their neighbours, as they are to take them up, yet how is it possible for him that makes even the most publick recantation of his slander, to be sure that every man that hath come to the hearing of the one, shall do so of the other also? And if there be but one person, that doth not, (as probably there will be many) then is the reparation still short of the injury.

Yet every guilty Person must do all he can to repair the Injury. 12. This consideration is very fit to make men afraid of doing this wrong to their neighbour; but let it not be made use of to excuse those that have already done the wrong, from endeavouring to make the best reparations they can; for though 'tis odds it will not equal the injury, yet let them however do what they are able towards it. And this is so necessary towards the obtaining pardon of the sin, that none must expect the one, that do not perform the other. Whosoever therefore sets himself to repent of his faults of this kind, must by all prudent means endeavour to restore his neighbour to that degree of credit he hath deprived him of; and if that be not to be done without bringing the shame upon himself, of confessing publickly the slander, he must rather submit to that, than be wanting to this necessary part of justice, which he owes to the wronged party.

Justice in the Thoughts. 13. Thus I have gone through these four branches of negative Justice to our neighbour; wherein we must yet farther observe, that this Justice binds us not only in respect of our words and actions, but of our very Thoughts and Affections also: We are not only forbid to hurt, but to hate; not only restrained from bringing any of these evils forementioned upon him, but we must not so much as wish them before, nor delight in them after they have befallen him; we must take no pleasure either in the sin of his soul, or hurt of his body; we must not envy him any good thing he enjoys, nor so much as wish to possess our selves of it; neither will it suffice us, that we so bridle our tongue, that we neither slander nor revile, if we have that malice in our hearts, which makes us wish his discredit, or rejoyce when we find it procured, though we have no hand in the procuring it. This is the peculiar property of God's Laws, that they reach to the heart, whereas mens can extend only to the words and actions; and the reason is clear, because he is the only Law-giver, that can see what is in the heart: Therefore, if there were the perfectest innocency in our tongue and hands, yet if there be not this purity of heart, it will never serve to acquit us before him. The counsel therefore of *Solomon* is excellent, *Prov.* 4. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.* Let us strictly guard that, so that no malicious unjust Thought enter there; and that not only as it may be the means of betraying us to the grosser act, but also as it is in it self such a pollution in God's sight, as will unfit us for the blessed vision of God, whom none but the pure in heart have promise of seeing, *Matth.* 5. 8. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

Positive Justice. 14. I come now to speak of the positive part of Justice, which is the yielding to every man that which by any kind of right he may challenge from us. Of these dues there are some that are general to all mankind, others that are restrained within some certain conditions and qualities of men, and become due only by virtue of those qualifications.

Speaking Truth a due to all Men. 15. Of the first sort, that is, those that are due to all men, we may reckon, first, the Speaking Truth, which is a common debt we owe to all mankind. Speech is given us as the instrument of intercourse and society one with another, the means of discovering the mind, which otherwise lies hid and concealed, so that were it not for this, our conversations would be but the same as of beasts. Now this being intended for the good and advantage of mankind, 'tis a due to it, that it be used to that purpose; but he that lies, is so far from paying that debt, that on the contrary, he makes his speech the means of injuring and deceiving him he speaks to.

Lying expressly forbidden in Scripture. 16. There might much be said to shew the several sorts of obligations we lie under to speak Truth to all men; but supposing I write to Christians, I need not insist upon any other, than the commands we have of it in Scripture; thus *Ephes.* 4. 25. the Apostle commands that *putting away Lying, they speak every man truth with his neighbour:* And again, *Col.* 3. 9. *Lye not one to another:* And *Prov.* 6. 17. a lying tongue is mentioned as one of those things that are abominations to the Lord; yea, so much

doth he hate a Lye, that it is not the moſt pious and religious end that can reconcile him to it; the man that lies, though in a zeal to God's glory, ſhall yet be judged as a ſinner, *Rom.* 3. 7. What ſhall then become of thoſe multitudes of men that lye on quite other ends? Some out of malice, to miſchief others; ſome out of covetouſneſs, to defraud their neighbours; ſome out of pride, to ſet themſelves out; and ſome out of fear, to avoid danger, or hide a fault. But of a yet ſtranger ſort than all theſe, are thoſe that do it without any diſcernible temptation, that will tell lies by way of ſtory, take pleaſure in telling incredible things, from which themſelves reap nothing but the reputation of impertinent Lyars.

17. Among theſe divers kinds of falſhood, truth is become ſuch a rarity among us, that it is a moſt difficult matter to find ſuch a man as *David* deſcribes, *Pſal.* 15. 2. *that ſpeaketh the truth from his heart.* Men have ſo glibbed their tongues to Lying, that they do it familiarly upon any or no occaſion, never thinking that they are obſerved either by God or man: But they are extremely deceived in both; for there is ſcarce any ſin (that is at all endeavoured to be hid) which is more diſcernible even to men: They that have a cuſtom of Lying, ſeldom fail (be their memory never ſo good) at ſome time or other to betray themſelves; and when they do, there is no ſort of ſin meets with greater ſcorn and reproach; a Lyar being by all accounted a title of the greateſt infamy and ſhame. But as for God, 'tis madneſs to hope that all their arts can diſguiſe them from him, who needs none of thoſe caſual ways of diſcovery, which men do, but ſees the heart, and ſo knows at the very inſtant of ſpeaking, the falſhood of what is ſaid; and then by his title of the God of truth, is tied, not only to hate, but puniſh it. And accordingly you ſee, *Rev.* 22. that the Lyars are in the number of thoſe that are ſhut out of the *New Jeruſalem*; and not only ſo, but alſo have their *part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone.* If therefore thou be not of the humour of that unjuſt judge Chriſt ſpeaks of, *Luke* 18. 2. *who neither feared God, nor regarded man*, thou muſt reſolve on this part of juſtice, the putting away Lying, which is abhorred by both.

The great Commonneſs and Folly of this Sin.

18. A ſecond thing we owe to all, is Humanity, and courteſie of Behaviour, contrary to that ſullen churliſhneſs we find ſpoken of in *Nabal*, who was of ſuch a temper, *that a man could not ſpeak to him*, 1 Sam. 25. 17. There is ſure ſo much of reſpect due to the very nature of mankind, that no accidental advantage of wealth or honour, which one man hath above another, can acquit him from that debt to it, even in the perſon of the meaneſt; and therefore that crabbed and harſh Behaviour to any that bears but the form of a man, is an injuſtice to that nature he partakes of. And when we conſider how much that nature is dignified by the Son of God his taking it upon him, the obligation to reverence it is yet greater, and conſequently the ſin of thus contemning it.

Courteous Behaviour a due to all Men.

19. This is the common guilt of all proud and haughty perſons, who are ſo buſie in admiring themſelves, that they overlook all that is valuable in others, and ſo think they owe not ſo much as common civility to other men, whilſt they ſet up themſelves, as *Nebuchadnezzar* did his image, *to be worſhipped of all.* This is ſure very contrary to what the Apoſtle exhorts, *Rom.* 12. 10. *In honour prefer one another;* and again, *Phil.* 2. 4. *Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others:* And let ſuch remember the ſentence of our bleſſed Saviour, *Luke* 14. 11. *He that exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted*, which we often find made good to us, in the ſtrange downfals of proud men. And it is no wonder, for this ſin makes both God and men our enemies; God, as the Scripture every where teſtifies, abhors it, and all that are guilty of it; and men are by means of it uſed ſo contemptuouſly and unkindly by us, that they are by nothing more provoked againſt us; and then whom God and man thus reſiſt, who ſhall ſecure and uphold?

Not paid by the proud Man.

20. A third thing we owe to all is Meekneſs; that is, ſuch a patience and gentleneſs towards all, as may bridle that mad paſſion of anger, which is not only very uneaſie to our ſelves, as hath already been ſhewed, but alſo very miſchievous to our neighbours, as the many outrages, that are oft committed in it, do abundantly teſtifie. That this duty of Meekneſs is to be extended to all men, there is no doubt; for the Apoſtle in expreſs words commands it, 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 14. *Be patient toward all men*, and that, it ſhould ſeem, in ſpite of all provocation to the contrary; for the very next words are, *See that none render evil for evil, or railing for railing*; and *Timothy* is commanded to exerciſe this Meekneſs, even towards them who oppoſe themſelves againſt the doctrine of the Goſpel, 2 *Tim.* 2. 25. which was a caſe wherein ſome heat would probably have been allowed, if it might have been in any.

Meekneſs a due to all Men.

21. This

Brawling very insufferable.

21. This virtue of Meekneſs is ſo neceſſary to the preſerving the peace of the world, that it is no wonder that Chriſt, who came to plant peace among men, ſhould enjoin Meekneſs to all. I am ſure the contrary effects of rage and anger are every where diſcernible; it breeds diſquiet in kingdoms, in neighbourhoods, in families, and even between the neareſt relations; 'tis ſuch a humour, that *Solomon* warns us never to enter a friendſhip with a man that is of it, *Prov.* 22. 24. *Make no friendſhip with an angry man, and with a furious man thou ſhalt not go.* It makes a man unfit to be either friend or companion, and indeed makes one inſufferable to all that have to do with him, as we are again taught by *Solomon*, Prov. 21. 19. where he prefers the *dwelling in a wilderneſs, rather than with a contentious and angry woman*; and yet a woman has ordinarily only that one weapon of the tongue to offend with. Indeed to any that have not the ſame unquietneſs of humour, there can ſcarce be a greater uneaſineſs, than to converſe with thoſe that have it, though it never proceed farther than words. How great this ſin is we may judge by what our Saviour ſays of it, *Matth.* 5. where there are ſeveral degrees of puniſhment allotted to ſeveral degrees of it: But alas! we daily out-go that which he there ſets as the higheſt ſtep of this ſin; the calling, *Thou fool*, is a modeſt ſort of reviling, compared with thoſe multitudes of bitter reproaches we uſe in our rages.

It leads to that great ſin of Curſing.

22. Nay, we often go yet higher; reproaches ſerve not our turn, but we muſt curſe too. How common is it to hear men uſe the horrideſt Execrations and Curſings upon every the ſlighteſt cauſe of diſpleaſure? nay, perhaps, without any cauſe at all: So utterly have we forgot the rule of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 12. 14. *Bleſs, and curſe not*; yea, the precept of our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, *Matth.* 5. 44. *Pray for thoſe that deſpitefully uſe you.* Chriſt bids us pray for thoſe, who do us all injury, and we are often Curſing thoſe, who do us none. This is a kind of ſaying our prayers backward indeed, which is ſaid to be part of the ceremony the Devil uſes at the making of a witch; and we have in this caſe alſo reaſon to look on it as a means of bringing us into acquaintance and league with that accurſed ſpirit here, and to a perpetual abiding with him hereafter: 'Tis the language of hell, which can never fit us to be citizens of the *New Jeruſalem*, but marks us out for inhabitants of that land of darkneſs. I conclude this with the advice of the Apoſtle, *Epheſ.* 4. 31. *Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking be put away from you, with all malice.*

Particular Dues.

23. Having ſpoken thus far of thoſe common Dues, wherein all men are concerned and have a right, I am now to proceed to thoſe other ſorts of Dues, which belong to particular perſons, by virtue of ſome ſpecial qualification. Theſe qualifications may be of three kinds; that of excellency, that of want, and that of relation.

A Reſpect due to Men of extraordinary Gifts.

24. By that of excellency, I mean any extraordinary Gifts or endowments of a perſon; ſuch as wiſdom, learning, and the like, but eſpecially Grace. Theſe, being the ſingular Gifts of God, have a great value and reſpect due to them, whereſoever they are to be found; and this we muſt readily pay, by a willing and glad acknowledgment of thoſe his Gifts, in any he has beſtowed them on, and bearing them a reverence and reſpect anſwerable thereunto; and not out of an over-weening of our own excellencies, deſpiſe and undervalue thoſe of others, as they do, who will yield nothing to be reaſon, but what themſelves ſpeak, nor any thing piety, but what agrees with their own practice.

We are not to envy them,

25. Alſo we muſt not envy or grudge that they have thoſe gifts; for that is not only an injuſtice to them, but injurious alſo to God, who gave them, as it is at large ſet forth in the parable of the labourers, *Matt.* 20. where he aſks them, who grumbled at the Maſter's bounty to others, *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is thine eye evil becauſe mine is good?* This envying at God's goodneſs to others, is in effect a murmuring againſt God, who thus diſpoſes it; neither can there be a greater and more direct oppoſition againſt him, than for me to hate and wiſh ill to a man, for no other reaſon, but becauſe God hath loved and done well to him. And then in reſpect of the man, 'tis the moſt unreaſonable thing in the world, to love him the leſs, merely becauſe he has thoſe good qualities, for which I ought to love him more.

Nor detract from them.

26. Neither muſt we detract from the excellencies of others: We muſt not ſeek to eclipſe or darken them, by denying either the kinds or degrees of them, by that means to take off that eſteem which is due to them. This ſin of detraction is generally the effect of the former of envy; he that envies a man's worth, will be apt to do all he can to leſſen it in the opinions of others, and to that purpoſe will either ſpeak ſlightly of his excellencies, or, if they be ſo apparent, that he knows not how to cloud them, he will try, if he can, by reporting ſome either real or feigned infirmity of his, take off from the value of the other, and ſo by caſting in ſome dead flies, as the

wise man speaks, *Eccles.* 10. 1. strive to *corrupt the savour of the ointment.* This is a great injustice, and directly contrary to that duty we owe of acknowledging and reverencing the Gifts of God in our brethren.

27. And both those Sins of Envy and Detraction do usually prove as great Follies as wickedness; Envy constantly brings pain and torment to a man's self; whereas, if he could but chearfully and gladly look on those good things of another's, he could never fail to be the better for them himself; the very pleasure of seeing them would be some advantage to him: But besides that, those gifts of his brother may be many ways helpful to him, his wisdom and learning may give him instruction; his piety and virtue, example, *&c.* But all this the envious man loseth, and hath nothing in exchange for it, but a continual fretting and gnawing of heart.

The Folly of both those Sins.

28. And then for Detraction, that can hardly be so managed, but it will be found out; he that is still putting in caveats against mens good thoughts of others, will quickly discover himself to do it out of Envy; and then that will be sure to lessen their esteem of himself, but not of those he envies; it being a sort of bearing testimony to those excellencies, that he thinks them worth the envying.

29. What hath been said of the value and respect due to those excellencies of the mind, may in a lower degree be applied to the outward advantages of honour, greatness, and the like. These, though they are not of equal value with the former (and such for which no man is to prize himself) yet, in regard that these degrees and distinctions of men, are by God's wise providence disposed for the better ordering of the world, there is such a civil respect due to those, to whom God hath dispens'd them, as may best preserve that order, for which they were intended. Therefore all inferiours are to behave themselves to their superiours with modesty and respect, and not by a rude boldness confound that order, which it hath pleased God to set in the world, but according as our Church Catechism teaches, *Order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters.* And here the former caution against envy comes in most seasonably; these outward advantages being things, of which generally men have more taste than of the other, and therefore will be more apt to envy and repine to see others exceed them therein: To this therefore all the former considerations against envy will be very proper, and the more necessary to be made use of, by how much the temptation is in this case to most minds the greater.

A Respect due to Men in regard of their Ranks and Qualities.

30. The second qualification is that of Want: Whoever is in distress for any thing, wherewith I can supply him, that distress of his makes it a duty in me so to supply him; and this in all kinds of Wants. Now the ground of its being a duty is, that God hath given men abilities, not only for their own use, but for the advantage and benefit of others; and therefore what is thus given for their use, becomes a debt to them, whenever their need requires it. Thus he that is ignorant and wants knowledge, is to be instructed by him that hath it; and this is one special end why that knowledge is given him: *The tongue of the learned is given to speak a word in season, Isa.* 50. 4. He that is in sadness and affliction, is to be comforted by him that is himself in chearfulness: This we see St. *Paul* makes the end of God's comforting him, that he *might be able to comfort them that are in any trouble,* 2 Cor. 1. 4. He that is in any course of sin, and wants reprehension and counsel, must have that Want supplied to him by those, who have such abilities and opportunities, as may make it likely to do good. That this is a justice we owe to our neighbour, appears plainly by that text, *Lev.* 19. 17. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise reprove him, and not suffer sin upon him;* where we are under the same obligation to reprove him, that we are not to hate him. He that lies under any slander or unjust defamation, is to be defended and cleared by him that knows his innocence, or else he makes himself guilty of the slander, because he neglects to do that, which may remove it; and how great an injustice that of slandering our neighbour is, I have already shewed.

Dues to those that are in any sort of Want.

31. Lastly, He that is in poverty and need, must be relieved by him that is in plenty; and he is bound to it, not only in charity, but even in justice: *Solomon* calls it a Due, *Prov.* 3. 27. *Withhold not good from him to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it:* And what that good is, he explains in the very next verse; *Say not to thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.* It seems 'tis the withholding a due, so much as to defer giving to our poor neighbour; and we find God did among the *Jews* separate a certain portion of every man's increase to the use of the poor, a tenth every third year (which is all one with the thirtieth part every year) *Deut.* 14. 28, 29. And this was to be paid, not as a charity or liberality, but as a debt: They were unjust if they withheld it. And

To the Poor.

surely we have no reason to think that *Christian* justice is sunk so much below the *Jewish*, that either nothing at all, or a less proportion, is now required of us. I wish our practice were but at all answerable to our obligation in this point, and then surely we should not see so many *Lazarus*'s lie unrelieved at our doors, they having a better right to our superfluities, than we our selves have; and then what is it but arrant robbery, to bestow that upon our vanities, nay, our sins, which should be their portion?

God withdraws those Abilities which are not thus employed.

32. In all the foregoing cases, he that hath Ability, is to look upon himself as God's steward, who hath put it into his hands to distribute to them that want; and therefore not to do it, is the same injustice and fraud, that it would be in any steward to purse up that money for his private benefit, which was intrusted to him for the maintenance of the family; and he that shall do thus, hath just reason to expect the doom of the unjust steward, *Luke* 16. *to be put out of his stewardship*, to have those Abilities taken from him, which he hath so unfaithfully employed. And as for all the rest, so particularly for that of wealth, 'tis very commonly to be observed, that it is withdrawn from those that thus defraud the poor of their parts, the griping miser coming often by strange and undiscernible ways to poverty; and no wonder, he having no title to God's blessing on his heap, who does not consecrate a part to him in his poor members. And therefore we see the *Israelites*, before they could make that challenge of God's promise to bless them, *Deut.* 26. 15. *Look down from thy holy habitation, and bless thy people Israel*, &c. they were first to pay the poor man's tithes, *ver.* 12. without which they could lay no claim to it. This withholding *more than is meet*, as *Solomon* says, *Prov.* 11. 24. *tends to poverty*: And therefore, as thou wouldst play the good husband for thy self, be careful to perform this justice, according to thy Ability, to all that are in Want.

Duties in respect of Relation.

33. The third qualification is that of Relation: And of that there may be divers sorts, arising from divers grounds and duties answerable to each of them. There is, first, a Relation of a debtor to a creditor; and he that stands in that Relation to any, whether by virtue of bargain, loan or promise, 'tis his duty to pay justly what he owes, if he be able (as on the other side, if he be not, 'tis the creditor's, to deal charitably and Christianly with him, and not to exact of him beyond his Ability.) But I need not insist on this, having already, by shewing you the sin of withholding debts, informed you of this Duty.

Gratitude to Benefactors.

34. There is also a relation of an obliged person to his Benefactor, that is, one that hath done him good, of what kind soever, whether spiritual or corporal: And the duty of that person is, first, thankfulness, that is, a ready and hearty acknowledgment of the courtesie received; secondly, prayer for God's blessings and rewards upon him; and thirdly, an endeavour, as opportunity and ability serves, to make returns of kindness, by doing good turns back again. This duty of Gratitude to Benefactors is so generally acknowledged by all, even the most barbarous and savagest of men, that he must have put off much of his human nature that refuses to perform it: The very *Publicans and sinners*, as our Saviour says, *do good to those that do good to them.*

The contrary too common.

35. Yet how many of us fail even in this? How frequent is it to see men not only neglect to repay courtesies, but return injuries instead of them? It is too observable in many particulars, but in none more, than in the case of advice and admonition, which is of all others the most precious part of kindness, the reallest good turn that can be done from one man to another: And therefore those that do this to us, should be lookt on as our prime and greatest Benefactors. But alas! how few are there that can find Gratitude, shall I say? nay, patience for such a courtesie? Go about to admonish a man of a fault, or tell him of an error, he presently looks on you as his enemy: You are, as St. *Paul* tells the *Galatians*, Chap. 4. 16. *become his enemy, because you tell him the truth.* Such a pride there is in mens hearts, that they must not be told of any thing amiss, though it be with no other intent, but that they may amend it. A strange madness this is, the same that it would be in a sick man to fly in the face of him that comes to cure him, on a fancy that he disparaged him in supposing him sick; so that we may well say with the Wise man, *Prov.* 12. 1. *He that hateth reproof is brutish*, There cannot be in the world a more unhappy temper, for it fortifies a man in his sins, raises such mounts and bulwarks about them, that no man can come to assault them; and, if we may believe *Solomon*, destruction will not fail to attend it, *Prov.* 29. 1. *He that being often reproved hardneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* But then again in respect of the admonisher, 'tis the greatest injustice, I may say, cruelty that can be: He comes in tenderness and compassion to rescue thee from danger, and to that purpose puts himself upon a very uneasie task; for such the general impatience men have to admonition, hath now made it; and what

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a dream, what a grief is it to him, to find that instead of reforming the first fault, thou art run into a second, to wit, that of causless displeasure against him? This is one of the worst, and yet I doubt, the commonest sort of unthankfulness to Benefactors; and so a great failing in that duty we owe to that sort of relation. But perhaps these will be lookt on as remote relations; yet 'tis sure they are such, as challenge all that duty I have assigned to them. I shall in the next place proceed to those relations, which are by all acknowledged to be of the greatest nearness.

SUNDAY XIV.

Of Duty to Magistrates, Pastors. Of the Duty of Parents to Children, &c. Of Childrens Duty unto Parents, &c.

Sect. 1. THE First of those nearer sorts of relations is that of a Parent: And here it will be necessary to consider the several sorts of Parents, according to which the duty of them is to be measured. Those are these three, the civil, the spiritual, the natural. *Duty to Parents.*

2. The civil Parent is he, whom God hath established the supreme Magistrate, who by a just right possesses the throne in a nation. This is the common father of all those that are under his authority. *Duties to the supreme Magistrate.*

The duty we owe to this Parent, is first, Honour and Reverence, looking on him as upon one, on whom God hath stamped much of his own power and authority, and therefore paying him all Honour and Esteem, never daring, upon any pretence whatsoever, to *speak evil of the ruler of our people*, Acts 23. 5. *Honour.*

3. Secondly, paying Tribute: This is expresly commanded by the Apostle, *Rom.* 13. 6. *Pay ye Tribute also, for they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing.* God hath set them apart as ministers for the common good of the people; and therefore 'tis all justice they should be maintained and supported by them. And indeed when it is considered what are the cares and troubles of that high calling, how many thorns are platted in every crown, we have very little reason to envy them these dues; and it may truly be said, there is none of their poor labouring subjects, that earns their living so hardly. *Tribute.*

4. Thirdly, We are to pray for them: This is also expresly commanded by the Apostle, 1 *Tim.* 2. 2. to be done for *Kings, and for all that are in authority.* The businesses of that calling are so weighty, the dangers and hazards of it so great, that they of all others need Prayers for God's direction, assistance and blessing; and the Prayers that are thus poured out for them will return into our own bosoms. For the blessings they receive from God tend to the good of the people, to their *living a quiet and peaceable life*, as it is in the close of the verse forementioned. *Prayers for them.*

5. Fourthly, We are to pay them Obedience. This is likewise strictly charged by the Apostle, 1 *Pet.* 2. 13. *Submit your selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governours as those that are sent by him.* We owe such an Obedience to the supreme power, that whoever is authoriz'd by him, we are to submit to; and St. *Paul* likewise is most full to this purpose, *Rom.* 13. 1. *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.* And again, ver. 2. *Whosoever resisteth the powers, resisteth the ordinance of God.* And it is observable that these precepts were given at a time, when those powers were Heathens, and cruel persecutors of Christianity, to shew us that no pretence of the wickedness of our rulers can free us from this Duty. An Obedience we must pay, either active or passive; the active in the case of all lawful commands; that is, whenever the Magistrate commands something, which is not contrary to some command of God, we are then bound to act according to that command of the Magistrate, to do the things he requires. But when he enjoins any thing contrary to what God hath commanded, we are not then to pay him this active Obedience; we may, nay, we must refuse thus to act (yet here we must be very well assured, that the thing is so contrary, and not pretend conscience for a cloak of stubbornness) we are in that case *to obey God rather than man.* But even this is a season for the passive Obedience; we must patiently suffer what he inflicts on us for such refusal, and not, to secure our selves, rise up against him; *For who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's Anointed, and be guiltless?* says *David* to *Abishai*, 1 Sam. 26. 9. And that at a time, when *David* was under a great persecution from *Saul*; nay, had *Obedience.*

also

alſo the aſſurance of the kingdom after him: And St *Paul's* ſentence in this caſe is moſt heavy, *Rom.* 13. 2. *They that reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation.* Here is very ſmall encouragement to any to riſe up againſt the lawful Magiſtrate; for though they ſhould ſo far proſper here, as to ſecure themſelves from him by this means, yet there is a King of kings, from whom no power can ſhelter them: And this damnation in the cloſe will prove a ſad prize of their victories. What is, on the other ſide, the duty of the Magiſtrate to the people will be in vain to mention here, none of that rank being like to read this treatiſe, and it being very uſeleſs for the people to enquire what is the duty of their Supreme, wherein the moſt are already much better read, than in their own: It may ſuffice them to know, that whatſoever his duty is, or however performed, he is accountable to none but God, and no failing of his part can warrant them to fail of theirs.

Duties to our Paſtors. 6. The ſecond ſort of Parents are the ſpiritual; that is, the Miniſters of the Word, whether ſuch as be governours in the Church, or others under them, who are to perform the ſame offices to our ſouls, that our natural parents do to our bodies. Thus St. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, that in *Chriſt Jeſus he had begotten them through the Goſpel*, 1 Cor. 4. 15. And the *Galatians*, Chap. 4. 19. that he *travails in birth of them, till Chriſt be formed in them.* And again, 1 *Cor.* 3. 2. *He had fed them with milk*, that is, ſuch doctrines as were agreeable to that infant ſtate of Chriſtianity they were then in; but he had *ſtronger meat for them of full age*, Heb. 5. 14. All theſe are the offices of a parent; and therefore they that perform them to us, may well be accounted as ſuch.

Love. 7. Our Duty to theſe, is firſt, to love them, to bear them that kindneſs which belongs to thoſe, who do us the greateſt benefits. This is required by St. *Paul*, 1 Theſſ. 5. 12, 13. *I beſeech you, brethren, mark them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admoniſh you, and eſteem them very highly in Love for their works ſake.* The work is ſuch as ought in all reaſon to procure them Love, it being of the higheſt advantage to us.

Eſteem. 8. Secondly, 'Tis our Duty to value and eſteem them, as we ſee in the text now mentioned; and ſurely this is moſt reaſonable, if we conſider either the nature of their work, or who it is that employs them. The nature of their work is of all others the moſt excellent. We uſe to value other profeſſions proportionably to the dignity and worth of the things they deal in: Now ſurely there is no merchandize of equal worth with a ſoul, and this is their traffick, reſcuing precious ſouls from perdition. And if we conſider further, who it is that employs them, it yet adds to the reverence due to them: They are *ambaſſadors for Chriſt*, 2 Cor. 5. 20. And ambaſſadors are by the laws of all nations to be uſed with a reſpect anſwerable to the quality of thoſe that ſend them. Therefore Chriſt tells his Diſciples, when he ſends them out to preach, *He that deſpiſeth you deſpiſeth me, and he that deſpiſeth me deſpiſeth him that ſent me*, Luke 10. 16. It ſeems there is more depends on the deſpiſing of Miniſters, than men ordinarily conſider; 'tis the deſpiſing of God and Chriſt both. Let thoſe think of this, who make it their paſtime and ſport to affront and deride this calling: And let thoſe alſo, who dare preſume to exerciſe the offices of it, without being lawfully called to it, which is a moſt high preſumption; 'tis as if a man of his own head ſhould go as an ambaſſador from his Prince. The Apoſtle ſays of the Prieſts of the Law, which yet are inferior to thoſe of the Goſpel, *That no man taketh this honour unto himſelf, but he which was called of God*, Heb. 5. 4. How ſhall then any man dare to aſſume this greater honour to himſelf that is not called to it? Neither will it ſuffice to ſay, they have the inward call of the Spirit; for ſince God hath eſtabliſhed an order in the Church, for the admitting men to this office, they that ſhall take it upon them without that authority, reſiſt that ordinance, and are but of the number of thoſe thieves and robbers, as our Saviour ſpeaks, *John* 10. *which come not in by the door.* Beſides, the ſad experience of theſe times ſhews, that many, who pretend moſt to this inward call of the Spirit, are called by ſome other ſpirit than that of God; the doctrines they vent being uſually directly contrary to that Word of his, on which all true doctrines muſt be founded. Such are to be lookt on as thoſe ſeducers, thoſe falſe prophets, whereof we are ſo often warned in the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles. And whoſoever countenances them, or follows them, partakes with them in their guilt. It is recorded of *Jeroboam*, as a crying ſin, that he made of the meaneſt of the people Prieſts; that is, ſuch as had by God's inſtitution no right to it: And whoever hearkens to theſe uncalled preachers, runs into that very ſin; for without the encouragement of being followed, they would not long continue in the courſe; and therefore they that give them that encouragement, have much to anſwer for, and are

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certainly guilty of the sin of despising their true Pastors, when they shall thus set up these false apostles against them. This is a guilt this age is too much concerned in, God in his mercy so timely convince us of it, as may put a stop to that confusion and impiety, which breaks in so fast upon us by it!

9. Thirdly, We owe to them Maintenance: But of this I have spoken already in the first part of this book, and shall not here repeat. *Maintenance.*

Fourthly, We owe them Obedience: *Obey them*, saith the Apostle, *that have the rule over you, and submit your selves, for they watch for your souls*, Heb. 13. 17. This Obedience is to be paid them in spiritual things, that is, whatsoever they, out of God's Word, shall declare to us to be God's commands, these we are diligently to obey, remembring that it is not they, but God requires it, according to that of Christ, *He that heareth you, heareth me*, Luke 10. 16. And this, whether it be delivered by the way of publick preaching, or private exhortation; for in both, so long as they keep them to the rule which is God's Word, they are the *messengers of the Lord of Hosts*, Mal. 2. 7. This Obedience the Apostle enforceth from a double motive, one taken from their ministry, another from themselves: *They watch*, says he, *for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief.* The people are by their Obedience to enable their Pastors to give a comfortable account of their souls; and it is a most unkind return of all their care and labours to be put to grieve for the ill success of them. But then, in the second place, 'tis their own concernment also: They may put their Ministers to the discomfort of seeing all their pains cast away, but themselves are like to get little by it, that (says the Apostle *Heb.* 13. 17.) will be *unprofitable for you*; 'tis your selves that will finally prove the losers by it; you lose all those glorious rewards which are here offered as the crown of this Obedience; you get nothing but an addition to your sin and punishment: For, as our Saviour tells the *Pharisees*, *If he had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin*, John 15. 24. that is, in comparison with what they then had; so certainly they, that never had the Gospel preached to them, are much more innocent than they that have heard and resisted it. And for the punishment, what Christ told those to whom he had preached, *that it should be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon*, which were heathen cities, *than for them*, the same undoubtedly we may conclude for our selves. *Obedience.*

10. Lastly, We are to pray for them: This St. *Paul* every where requires of his spiritual children; thus *Ephes.* 6. 7, 8. having commanded Prayer for all saints, he adds, *And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel*; and so again, *Col.* 4. 3. And this remains still a Duty to these spiritual Fathers, to pray for such assistances of God's Spirit to them, as may enable them rightly to discharge that holy calling. I shall omit to set down here what is the duty of Ministers to the people, upon the same consideration on which I forbare to mention the duty of magistrates. *Prayers for them.*

11. The third sort of Parent is the natural, the *Fathers of our flesh*, as the Apostle calls them, *Heb.* 12. 9. And to these we owe several Duties; as first, we owe them Reverence and Respect; we must behave our selves towards them with all humility and observance, and must not upon any pretence of infirmity in them, despise or contemn them, either in outward behaviour, or so much as inwardly in our hearts. If indeed they have infirmities, it must be our business to cover and conceal them, like *Shem* and *Japhet*, who, while cursed *Cham* published and *disclosed the nakedness of their Father, covered it*, Gen. 9. 23. and that in such a manner too, as even themselves might not behold it. We are, as much as may be, to keep our selves from looking on those nakednesses of our Parents, which may tempt us to think irreverently of them. This is very contrary to the practice of too many children, who do not only publish and deride the infirmities of their Parents, but pretend they have those infirmities they have not: There is ordinarily such a pride and headiness in youth, that they cannot abide to submit to the counsels and directions of their elders; and therefore to shake them off, are willing to have them pass for the effects of dotage, when they are indeed the fruits of sobriety and experience. To such the exhortation of *Solomon* is very necessary, *Prov.* 23. 22. *Hearken to thy Father that begat thee, and despise not thy Mother when she is old.* A multitude of texts more there are in that book to this purpose, which shews that the wisest of men thought it necessary for children to attend to the counsel of their Parents. But the youth of our age set up for wisdom the quite contrary way, and think they then become wits, when they are advanced to the despising the counsel, yea, mocking the persons of their Parents. Let such, if they will not practise the exhortations, yet remember the threatning of the Wise man, *Prov.* 30. 17. *The eye that mocketh at his Father, and* *Duties to our Natural Parents. Reverence.*

despiseth to obey his Mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

Love. 12. A second Duty we owe to them is Love: We are to bear them a real kindness, such as may make us heartily desirous of all manner of good to them, and abhor to do any thing that may grieve and disquiet them. This will appear but common gratitude, when 'tis remembred what our Parents have done for us, how they were not only the instruments of first bringing us into the world, but also of sustaining and supporting us after: And certainly they that rightly weigh the cares and fears that go to the bringing up of a child, will judge the Love of that child to be but a moderate return for them. This Love is to be exprest several ways: First, in all kindness of behaviour, carrying our selves not only with an awe and respect, but with kindness and affection, and therefore most gladly and readily doing those things which may bring joy and comfort to them, and carefully avoiding whatever may grieve and afflict them. Secondly, this love is to be exprest in praying for them. The debt a child owes to a Parent is so great, that he can never hope himself to discharge it: He is therefore to call in God's aid, to beg of him, that he will reward all the good his Parents have done for him, by multiplying his blessings upon them: What shall we then say to those children, that instead of calling to heaven for blessings on their Parents, ransack hell for curses on them, and pour out the blackest execrations against them? This is a thing so horrid, that one would think they needed no perswasion against it, because none could be so vile as to fall into it; but we see God himself, who best knows mens hearts, saw it possible, and therefore laid the heaviest punishment upon it; *He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death*, Exod. 21. 17. And alas! our daily experience tells us, 'tis not only possible, but common, even this of uttering curses. But 'tis to be feared there is another yet more common, that is, the wishing curses, though fear or shame keep them from speaking out. How many children are there, that either through impatience of the government, or greediness of the possessions of their parents, have wished their deaths? But whoever doth so, let him remember, that how slily and fairly soever he carry it before men, there is one that sees those secretest wishes of his heart, and in his sight he assuredly passes for this heinous offender, a curser of his Parents. And then let it be considered that God hath as well the power of punishing, as of seeing; and therefore, since he hath pronounced death to be the reward of that sin, 'tis not unreasonable to expect he may himself inflict it, that they, who watch for the death of their Parents, may untimely meet with their own. The fifth Commandment promiseth long life as the reward of honouring the Parent, to which 'tis very agreeable, that untimely death be the punishment of the contrary; and sure there is nothing more highly contrary to that duty, than this we are now speaking of, the cursing our Parents.

Obedience. 13. The third Duty we owe to them is Obedience: This is not only contained in the fifth Commandment, but expresly enjoined in other places of Scripture, *Eph.* 6. 1. *Children, obey your Parents in the Lord, for this is right*; and again, *Col.* 3. 20. *Children, obey your Parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.* We owe them our Obedience in all things, unless where their commands are contrary to the commands of God, for in that case our Duty to God must be preferred; and therefore, if any Parent shall be so wicked, as to require his child to steal, to lie, or to do any unlawful thing, the child then offends not against his Duty, though he disobey that command; nay, he must disobey, or else he offends against a higher Duty, even that he owes to God, his heavenly Father. Yet, when 'tis thus necessary to refuse Obedience, he should take care to do it in such a modest and respectful manner, that it may appear 'tis conscience only, and not stubbornness moves him to it. But in case of all lawful commands, that is, when the thing commanded is either good, or not evil, when it hath nothing in it contrary to our Duty to God, there the child is bound to obey, be the command in a weightier or lighter matter. How little this Duty is regarded, is too manifest every where in the world, where Parents generally have their children no longer under command, than they are under the rod; when they are once grown up, they think themselves free from all Obedience to them; or, if some do continue to pay it, yet let the motive of it be examined, and 'twill in too many be found only worldly prudence; they fear to displease their Parents, lest they should shorten their hand towards them, and so they shall lose somewhat by it: But how few are there that obey purely upon conscience of Duty? This sin of disobedience to Parents was by the law of *Moses* punishable with death, as you may read, *Deut.* 21. 18. But if Parents now-a-days should proceed so with their children, many might soon make themselves childless.

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14. But of all the acts of disobedience, that of marrying against the consent of the Parent is one of the highest. Children are so much the goods, the possessions of their Parent, that they cannot without a kind of theft, give away themselves without the allowance of those that have the right in them: And therefore we see under the law, the maid *that had made any vow, was not suffered to perform it, without the consent of the Parent*, Numb. 30. 5. The right of the Parent was thought of force enough to cancel and make void the obligation even of a vow; and therefore surely it ought to be so much considered by us, as to keep us from making any such, whereby that right is infringed.

Especially in their Marriage.

15. A fourth Duty to the Parent, is to assist and minister to them in all their Wants of what kind soever, whether weakness and sickness of body, decayedness of understanding, or poverty and lowness in estate; in all these the child is bound, according to his ability, to relieve and assist them. For the two former, weakness of body, and infirmity of mind, none can doubt of the Duty, when they remember how every child did, in his infancy, receive the very same benefit from the Parents; the child had then no strength to support, no understanding to guide it self; the care of the Parents was fain to supply both these to it; and therefore in common gratitude, whenever either of these becomes the Parents case, as sometimes, by great age, or some accident both do, the child is to perform the same offices back again to them. As for that of relieving their poverty, there is the very same obligation to that with the former, it being but just to sustain thy Parent, who has formerly sustained thee. But besides this, Christ himself teacheth us, that this is contained within the precept of honouring their Parents; for when, *Mark* 7. 13. he accuses the *Pharisees of rejecting the Commandment of God to cleave to their own Traditions*, he instances in this particular, concerning the relieving of Parents; whereby 'tis manifest, that this is a part of that Duty, which is enjoyned in the fifth Commandment, as you may see at large in the text; and such a Duty it is, that no pretence can absolve, or acquit us of it. How then shall those answer it, that deny relief to their poor Parents, that cannot part with their own excesses and superfluities, which are indeed their sins, to satisfy the necessities of those to whom they owe their being? Nay, some there are yet worse, who out of pride scorn to own their Parents in their poverty: Thus it often happens, when the child is advanced to dignity or wealth, they think it a disparagement to them to look on their Parents, that remain in a low condition, it being the betraying, as they think, to the world the meanness of their birth; and so the poor Parent fares the worse for the prosperity of his child. This is such a pride and unnaturalness together, as will surely find a sharp vengeance from God; for if *Solomon* observe of pride alone, that it is the *forerunner of destruction*, Prov. 16. 18. we may much rather conclude so of it, when it is thus accompanied.

Ministring to their Wants.

16. To this that hath been said of the Duty of Children to their Parents, I shall add only this, that no unkindness, no fault of the Parent, can acquit the child of this Duty; but as St. *Peter* tells servants, 1 *Pet.* 2. 18. that they *must be subject not only to the good and gentle masters, but also to the froward*, so certainly it belongs to Children to perform Duty, not only to the kind and virtuous, but even to the harshest and wickedest Parent. For though the gratitude due to a kind Parent, be a very forcible motive to make the child pay his Duty, yet that is not the only nor chiefest ground of it; that is laid in the command of God, who requires us thus to honour our Parents. And therefore, though we should suppose a Parent so unnatural, as never to have done any thing to oblige the child (which can hardly be imagined) yet still the command of God continues in force, and we are, in conscience of that, to perform that Duty to our Parents, though none of the other tye of gratitude should lie on us.

Duty to be paid even to the worst of Parents.

But as this is due from the child to the Parent, so on the other side, there are other things also due from the Parents to the child, and that throughout the several states and ages of it.

Duty of Parents to Children.

17. First, There is the care of nourishing and sustaining it, which begins from the very birth, and continues a Duty from the Parent till the child be able to perform it to himself: This is a Duty which nature teaches; even the savage beasts have a great care and tenderness in nourishing their young, and therefore may serve to reproach and condemn all Parents, who shall be so unnatural as to neglect this. I shall not here enter into the question, *Whether the mother be obliged to give the child its first nourishment, by giving it suck her self*, because 'twill not be possible to affirm universally in the case, there being many circumstances, which may alter it, and make it not only lawful, but best not to do it; all I shall say is, that where no impediment of

To nourish them.

ſickneſs, weakneſs, or the like doth happen, 'tis ſurely beſt for the mother herſelf to perform this office, there being many advantages to the child by it, which a good mother ought ſo far to conſider, as not to ſell them to her own ſloth or niceneſs, or any ſuch unworthy motive: For where ſuch only are the grounds of forbearing it, they will never be able to juſtify the omiſſion, they being themſelves unjuſtifiable.

Bring them to Baptiſm. But beſides this firſt care, which belongs to the body of the child, there is another, which ſhould begin near as early, which belongs to their ſouls, and that is, the bringing them to the Sacrament of Baptiſm, thereby to procure them an early right to all thoſe precious advantages which that Sacrament conveys to them. This is a Duty the Parents ought not to delay, it being moſt reaſonable, that they, who have been inſtruments to convey the ſtain and pollution of ſin to the poor infant, ſhould be very earneſt and induſtrious to have it waſh'd off, as ſoon as may be; Beſides, the life of ſo tender a creature is but a blaſt, and many times gone in a moment; and tho' we are not to deſpair of God's mercy to thoſe poor Children, who die without Baptiſm, yet ſurely thoſe Parents commit a great fault, by whoſe neglect it is that they want it.

Educate them. 18. Secondly, The Parents muſt provide for the education of the child; they muſt, as *Solomon* ſpeaks, Prov. 22. 6. *Train up a Child in the way he ſhould go.* As ſoon therefore as Children come to the uſe of reaſon, they are to be inſtructed, and that, firſt, in thoſe things which concern their eternal well-being; they are by little and little to be taught all thoſe things, which God hath commanded them as their Duty to perform; as alſo what glorious rewards he hath provided for them, if they do it, and what grievous and eternal puniſhment, if they do it not. Theſe things ought, as early as is poſſible, to be inſtilled into the minds of Children, which (like new veſſels) do uſually keep the ſavour of that which is firſt put into them; and therefore it nearly concerns all Parents to look they be at firſt thus ſeaſoned with virtue and religion. 'Tis ſure if this be neglected, there is one ready at hand to fill them with the contrary; the Devil will be diligent enough to inſtil into them all wickedneſs and vice, even from their cradles: And there being alſo in all our natures ſo much the greater aptneſs to evil, than to good, there is need of great care and watchfulneſs, to prevent thoſe endeavours of that enemy of ſouls; which can no way be, but by poſſeſſing them at firſt with good things, breeding in them a love to virtue, and a hatred of vice, that ſo when the temptations come, they may be armed againſt them. This ſurely is above all things the Duty of Parents to look after, and the neglect of it is a horrible cruelty. We juſtly look upon thoſe Parents, as moſt unnatural wretches, that take away the life of their child; but alas! that is mercy and tenderneſs, compared to this of neglecting his education, for by that he ruins his ſoul, makes him miſerable eternally: And God knows, multitudes of ſuch cruel Parents there are in the world, that thus give up their Children to be poſſeſt by the Devil, for want of an early acquainting them with the ways of God. Nay, indeed, how few there are, that do conſcienably perform this Duty, is too apparent by the ſtrange rudeneſs and ignorance that is generally among youth; the Children of thoſe, who call themſelves Chriſtians, being frequently as ignorant of God and Chriſt, as the meereſt heathens. But whoever they are that thus neglect this great Duty, let them know that it is not only a fearful miſery they bring upon their poor Children, but alſo a horrible guilt upon themſelves: For as God ſays to the careleſs watchman, *Ezek.* 3. 18. *That if any ſoul periſh*, by his negligence, *that ſoul ſhall be required at his hands*; ſo ſurely will it fare with all Parents, who have this office of watchmen intruſted to them by God over their own Children. A ſecond part of education is the bringing them up to ſome employment, buſying them in ſome honeſt exerciſe, whereby they may avoid that great ſnare of the Devil, idleneſs, and alſo be taught ſome uſeful art or trade, whereby, when they come to age, they may become profitable to the commonwealth, and able to get an honeſt living to themſelves.

Means towards the Education of Children. 19. To this great Duty of educating of Children, there is required as Means, firſt, encouragement; ſecondly, correction. Encouragement is firſt to be tried; we ſhould endeavour to make Children in love with Duty, by offering them rewards and invitations, and whenever they do well, take notice of it, and encourage them to go on. It is an ill courſe ſome Parents hold, who think they muſt never appear to their Children, but with a face of ſowreneſs and auſterity; this ſeems to be that which St. *Paul* forewarns Parents of, when he bids *Fathers* not to *provoke their Children to wrath*, Col. 3. 21. To be as harſh and unkind to them, when they do well, as if they do ill, is the way to provoke them; and then the Apoſtle tells us in the ſame verſe, what will be the iſſue of it: They will be diſcouraged, they will have no heart to go on in any good courſe, when the Parent affords them no countenance. The

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second Means is correction, and this becomes seasonable, when the former will do no good: When all fair Means, persuasions, and encouragements prevail not, then there is a necessity of using sharper; and let that be first tried in words, I mean not by railing and foul language, but in sober, yet sharp reproof: but if that fail too, then proceed to blows: And in this case, as *Solomon* says, *He that spareth his rod hateth his son*, *Prov.* 13. 24. 'Tis a cruel fondness, that to spare a few stripes at present, will adventure him to those sad mischiefs, which commonly befal the child that is left to himself. But then this correction must be given in such a manner, as may be likely to do good; to which purpose it must first be given timely, the child must not be suffered to run on in any ill, till it hath got a habit and a stubbornness too. This is a great error in many Parents, they will let their Children alone for divers years to do what they list, permit them to lye, to steal, without ever so much as rebuking them, nay, perhaps, please themselves to see the witty shifts of the child, and think it matters not what they do while they are little. But alas! all that while the vice gets root, and that many times so deep an one, that all they can do afterwards, whether by words, or blows, can never pluck it up. Secondly, Correction must be moderate, not exceeding the quality of the fault, nor the tenderness of the child. Thirdly, It must not be given in rage, if it be, it will not only be in danger of being immoderate, but it will lose its effects upon the child, who will think he is corrected, not because he hath done a fault, but because his Parent is angry, and so will rather blame the Parent, than himself; whereas on the contrary, care should be taken to make the child as sensible of the fault, as of the smart, without which he will never be throughly amended.

The Parent to watch over their Souls, even when they are grown up.

20. Thirdly, after Children are grown up, and are past the age of Education, there are yet other offices for the Parent to perform to them: The Parent is still to watch over them in respect of their Souls, to observe how they practise those precepts, which are given them in their Education, and accordingly to exhort, encourage, or reprove, as they find occasion.

To provide for their Subsistence.

21. So also for their outward estate, they are to put them into some course of living in the world: If God have blessed the Parent with wealth, according to what he hath, he must distribute to his Children, remembring that since he was the instrument of bringing them into the world, he is, according to his ability, to provide for their comfortable living in it; they are therefore to be looked on as very unnatural Parents, who, so they may have enough to spend in their own riots and excess, care not what becomes of their Children, never think of providing for them. Another fault is usual among Parents in this business; they defer all the provisions for them, till themselves be dead, heap up perhaps great matters for them against that time, but in the mean time afford them not such a competency, as may enable them to live in the world. There are several mischiefs come from this: first, it lessens the child's affection to his Parent, nay, sometimes it proceeds so far as to make him wish his death; which, tho' it be such a fault, as no temptation can excuse in a child, yet 'tis also a great fault in a Parent to give that temptation. Secondly, it puts the child upon shifts and tricks, many times dishonest ones, to supply his necessities: This is, I doubt not, a common effect of it. The hardness of Parents has often put men upon very unlawful courses, which, when they are once acquainted with, perhaps they never leave, tho' the first occasion cease; and therefore Parents ought to beware, how they run them upon those hazards. Besides the Parent loses that contentment, which he might have in seeing his Children live prosperously and comfortably, which none but an arrant Earth-worm would exchange for the vain imaginary pleasure of having money in his chest. But in this business of providing for Children, there is yet another thing to be heeded, and that is, that the Parent get that wealth honestly, which he makes their portion; else 'tis very far from being a provision. There is such a curse goes along with an ill-gotten estate, that he that leaves such a one to his child, doth but cheat and deceive him, makes him believe he hath left him wealth, but has withal put such a canker in the bowels of it, that is sure to eat it out. This is so common an observation, that I need say nothing to confirm the truth of it; would God it were as generally laid to heart, as it seems to be generally taken notice of! Then surely Parents would not account it a reasonable motive to unjust dealing, that they may thereby provide for their Children: For this is not a way of providing for them, nay, 'tis the way to spoil them of whatever they have lawfully gathered for them; the least mite of unlawful gain, being of the nature of leaven, which sowres the whole lump, bringing down curses upon all a man possesseth. Let all Parents therefore satisfie themselves with such provisions for their Children, as God shall enable them honestly

to make, assuring themselves how little soever it be, 'tis a better portion than the greatest wealth unjustly gotten; according to that of *Solomon*, Prov. 16. 8. *Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.*

To give them good Example. 22. A fourth thing the Parent owes to the child, is good Example: He is not only to set him rules of virtue and godliness, but he must himself give him a pattern in his own practice. We see the force of Example is infinitely beyond that of precept, especially where the person is one to whom we bear a reverence, or with whom we have a continual conversation, both which usually meet in a Parent. It is therefore a most necessary care in all Parents, to behave themselves so before their Children, that their Example may be a means of winning them to virtue; But alas! this age affords little of this care; nay, so far 'tis from it, that there are none more frequently the instruments of corrupting Children, than their own Parents. And indeed, how can it be otherwise? While men give themselves liberty to all wickedness, 'tis not to be hoped, but that the Children which observe it, will imitate it: The child that sees his father drunk, will surely think he may be so too, as well as his father: So he that hears him swear, will do the like; and so for all other vices: And if any Parent, that is thus wicked himself, should happen to have so much more care of his child's soul, than his own, as to forbid him the things which himself practises, or correct him for the doing them, 'tis certain the child will account this a great injustice in his father, to punish him for that which himself freely does; and so is never likely to be wrought upon by it. This consideration lays a most strict tie upon all Parents to live christianly, for otherwise they do not only hazard their own souls, but those of their Children also, and as it were, purchase an estate of inheritance in Hell.

To bless them. 23. A fifth Duty of Parents is blessing their Children: The way of doing that is double; first, by their prayer; they are by daily and earnest prayers to commend them to God's protection and blessing, both for their spiritual and temporal estate: And secondly, by their piety; they are to be such persons themselves, as that a blessing may descend from them upon their posterity. This is often promised in Scripture to godly men, that their *Seed shall be blessed.* Thus in the second Commandment, God promises *to shew mercy to the thousandth generation of them that love him and keep his Commandments.* And it is very observable in the *Jews*, that tho' they were a stiff-necked Generation, and had very grievously provoked God, yet the godliness of their Fore-fathers, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, did many times move God to save them from destruction. On the other side, we see that even good men have fared the worse for the iniquities of their Fathers: Thus when *Josiah* had destroyed idolatry, restored God's Service, and done good beyond all the Kings that were before him, yet there was an old arrear of *Manasseh* his Grandfather, which all this piety of his would not blot out, but he resolves to cast *Judah also out of his sight*, as you may read at large, 2 *Kings* 23. If therefore Parents have any bowels, any kindness towards their Children, any real desire of their prosperity, let them take care by their own godly life, to entail a blessing upon them.

To give no unreasonable Commands. 24. Sixthly, Parents must take heed that they use their power over their Children with equity and moderation, not to oppress them with unreasonable Commands, only to exercise their own authority, but in all things of weight, to consider the real good of their Children, and to press them to nothing, which may not consist with that. This is a Rule whereof Parents may often have use, but in none greater than in the business of marrying their Children, wherein many, that otherwise are good Parents, have been to blame; when out of an eagerness of bestowing them wealthily, they force them to marry utterly against their own inclinations, which is a great tyranny, and that which frequently betrays them to a multitude of mischiefs, such as all the wealth in the world cannot repair. There are two things which Parents ought especially to consider in the matching their Children; the first, how they may live christianly, and to that purpose to chuse a virtuous and pious person to link them with: The second is, how they may live chearfully and comfortably in this world; And to that end, though a competency of estate may be necessary to be regarded, yet surely abundance is no way requisite; and therefore that should not be too vehemently sought after. That which much more tends to the happiness of that state, is the mutual kindness and liking of the parties, without which marriage is of all other the most uncomfortable condition; and therefore no Parent ought to thrust a child into it. I have now done with the first sort of Relation, that of a Parent.

SUNDAY XV.

Of Duty to our Brethren, and Relations, Husband, Wife, Friends, Masters, Servants.

Dues to Brethren.

Sect. 1. THE second sort of Relation is that of a Brother. Now Brotherhood may be two-fold, either natural or spiritual; The former may in the largest extent contain under it all mankind, all that partake of the same nature: But I shall not consider it so in this place, having already mentioned those general Duties which belong to all as such. I now speak of that natural Brotherhood that is between those that are the Children of the same immediate Parent; and the Duty of these is to have united hearts and affections. This nature points out to them, they partaking in a more especial manner of each others substance, and therefore ought to have the greatest tenderness and kindness each to other. Thus we see *Abraham* makes it an argument, why there should be *no contention between him and* Lot, *because they were brethren*, Gen. 13. 8. And though by Brethren there is meant only Cousins, yet that helps the more strongly to conclude, that this nearer Relation is in reason to be a greater bar to strife, as also that this kindness is in some degree to be extended to all that have any nearness of blood to us.

Natural.

The necessity of Love among Brethren.

2. This kindness and love between Brethren and Sisters ought to be very firmly grounded in their hearts; if it be not, they will be of all others in most danger of disagreeing: For the continual conversation that is among them, whilst they are at home in their Father's house, will be apt to minister some occasion of jar. Besides, the equality that is among them in respect of birth, often makes them inclinable to envy each other, when one is in any respect advanced above the other. Thus we see *Joseph's* Brethren envied him, because he had most of his Father's love; and *Rachel* envied her Sister *Leah*, because she was fruitful. Therefore for the preventing of such temptations, let all who have Brethren and Sisters possess their minds with a great and real kindness to them, look on them as parts of themselves, and then they will never think fit either to quarrel with them, or to envy them any advantage, any more than one part of the body does another of the same body, but will strive to advance and help forward the good of each other.

Spiritual Brotherhood.

3. The second kind of Brotherhood is spiritual; that contains all those who profess the same faith with us. The Church in our Baptism becomes a mother to each baptized person, and then surely they that have the Relation of Children to her, must have also the Relation of Brethren to each other. And to this sort of Brethren also we owe a great deal of tenderness and affection; the Spiritual bond of Religion should of all others, the most closely unite our hearts. This is the Brotherhood which St. *Peter* exhorts us to love, 1 *Pet.* 2. 17. And to it we are in an especial manner bound to do all good offices: *Do good*, saith the Apostle, *to all, but especially unto them who are of the houshold of faith*, Gal. 6. 10. Our compassions are to be most melting towards them of all others in all their needs: Christ tells us, that *whosoever gives but a cup of cold water to any in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward*, Matt. 10. 42. From whence we may assure our selves, that this peculiar love to Christians, as Christians, is very acceptable in his sight.

Our Duty to hold Communion with these Brethren.

4. Several Duties there are requir'd of us to these Brethren: One principal is, the holding Communion with them, and that, first, in Doctrine. We are constantly to continue in the belief and profession of all those necessary truths, by which we may be mark'd out as Followers and Disciples of Christ. This is that Faith, which St. *Jude* speaks of, *which was once delivered to the Saints*, Jude 3, by keeping whereof we continue still united to this Spiritual Brotherhood, in respect of profession, which we must constantly do, what storms and persecutions soever attend it, according to the exhortation of the Apostle, Heb. 10. 22. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* Secondly, We are also, as opportunity serves, to communicate with them in all holy offices; we must be diligent in frequenting the assemblies of the Saints, which is as it were the badge of our profession; and therefore he that willingly withdraws himself from these, gives ground to suspect he will be apt to renounce the other also. But these parts of Communion we find strictly maintained by the first Christians, *Acts* 2. 42. *They continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* They continued, and that stedfastly, they were

were not frighted from it by any persecutions, though that were a time wherein they were tried with the sharpest sufferings; which may teach us, that it is not the danger that attends this Duty can acquit us of it.

To bear with their Infirmities. 5. Secondly, We are to bear with the Infirmities of our Christian Brethren, according to the advice of St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 15. 1. *We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.* If one that holds all necessary Christian Truths, happen yet to be in some error, we are not for this, either to forsake his Communion, or despise his person. This St. *Paul* teaches us in the case of that weak Brother, *who by error made a causless scruple about meats*, *Rom.* 14. Where he bids the stronger Christians, that is, those who being better instructed, discern'd him to be in an error, yet to receive him nevertheless, and not to despise him; as on the other side, he bids that weak one not to judge the stronger. The lesser differences in opinion must be born with on both sides, and must not in the least abate our brotherly charity towards each other.

To restore them after falls. 6. Thirdly, We are to endeavour the restoring of any fallen Brother; that is, to bring him to repentance after he hath fallen into any Sin. Thus St. *Paul* commands the *Galatians*, that they should *restore him that was overtaken in a fault, considering themselves, lest they were also tempted.* We are not to look on him as a cast-away, to give him over as utterly desperate, neither are we to triumph over him in respect of our own innocence, like the proud *Pharisee* over the poor *Publican*, *Luke* 18. 11. but we are meekly to endeavour his recovery, remembring that our own frailty is such, that we are not secure from the like Falls.

To sympathise with them. 7. Fourthly, We are to have a Sympathy and Fellow-feeling with these Brethren, to be nearly touch'd with whatsoever befalls them, either as they are considered in Society, or in single persons. In Society first, and so they make up a Church; and that, either the universal, which is made up of all believers throughout the World, or any particular Church, which is made up of all the believers in that particular Nation: And whatever happens to either of these, either the whole Church in general, or any such single part of it, especially that whereof our selves are members, we are to be much affected and moved with it, to rejoyce in all the prosperities, and to mourn and bewail all the breaches and desolations thereof, and daily and earnestly to pray with *David*, Psal. 51. 18. *O be favourable and gracious unto Sion, build thou the walls of Jerusalem;* and that especially when we see her in distress and persecution. Whosoever is not thus touch'd with the condition of the Church, is not to be look'd on as a living member of it; for as in the natural body every member is concern'd in the prosperity of the whole, so certainly 'tis here. It was the observation of the *Psalmist*, that God's *servants think upon the stones of Sion, and pity to see her in the dust*, Psal. 102. 14. And surely all his servants that are still of the same temper, cannot look on the ruins and desolations of the Church, without the greatest sorrow and lamentation. Secondly, We are to have this fellow-feeling with our Brethren consider'd as single persons; we are to account our selves concern'd in every particular Christian, so as to partake with him in all his occasions, either of joy or sorrow. Thus the Apostle exhorts, *Rom.* 12. 15. *Rejoyce with them that do rejoyce, weep with them that weep:* And again, 1 *Cor.* 26. under the similitude of the natural body he urges this Duty, *Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honoured, all the members rejoyce with it.* All these several effects of love we owe to these spiritual Brethren. And this love is that which Christ hath made the badge of his Disciples. *John* 13. 35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another*; so that if we mean not to cast of discipleship to Christ, we must not forsake this love of the Brethren.

The Wife owes to the Husband Obedience. 8. The third Relation is that between Husband and Wife: This is yet much nearer than either of the former, as appears by that text, *Ephes.* 5. 31. *A man shall leave Father and Mother, and cleave to his Wife, and they two shall be one Flesh.* Several Duties there are owing from one of these persons to the other; and First, for the Wife, she owes Obedience: This is commanded by the Apostle, *Col.* 3. 18. *Wives, submit your selves unto your own Husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.* They are to render Obedience to their Husbands in the Lord, that is, in all lawful commands, for otherwise 'tis here as in the case of all other superiors, God must be obey'd rather than man, and the Wife must not, upon her Husband's command, do any thing which is forbidden by God. But in all things, which do not cross some command of God's, this precept is of force, and will serve to condemn the peevish stubbornness of many Wives, who resist the lawful commands of their Husbands, only because they are impatient of this Duty of Subjection, which God himself requires of them. But it may here be ask'd, What if the Husband command something, which, though it be not unlawful, is yet very inconvenient

venient and imprudent, must the Wife submit to such a command? To this I answer, That it will be no disobedience in her, but Duty, calmly and mildly to shew him the inconveniences thereof, and to persuade him to retract that command: But in case she cannot win him to it by fair intreaties, she must neither try sharp language, nor yet finally refuse to obey; nothing but the unlawfulness of the command being sufficient warrant for that.

9. Secondly, The Wife owes Fidelity to the Husband, and that of two sorts: First, that of the bed; she must keep her self pure and chaste from all strange embraces, and therefore must not so much as give an ear to any that would allure her, but with the greatest abhorrence reject all motions of that sort, and never give any man, that has once made such a motion to her, the least opportunity to make a second. Secondly, She owes him likewise Fidelity in the managing those worldly affairs he commits to her, she must order them so, as may be most to her Husband's advantage, and not, by deceiving and cozening of him, employ his goods to such uses as he allows not of. *Fidelity.*

10. Thirdly, She owes him Love, and together with that all friendliness and kindness of conversation. She is to endeavour to bring him as much assistance, and comfort of life, as is possible, that so she may answer that special end of the woman's creation, the being *a help to her husband*, Gen. 2. 18. and this in all conditions, whether health or sickness, wealth or poverty: Whatsoever estate God by his providence shall cast him into, she must be as much of comfort and support to him, as she can. To this all sullenness and harshness, all brawling and unquietness is directly contrary; for that makes the Wife the burden and plague of the man, instead of a help and comfort. And sure if it be a fault to behave ones self so to any person, as hath already been shew'd, how great must it be to do so to him, to whom the greatest kindness and affection is owing? *Love.*

11. Nor let such Wives think that any Faults or Provocations of the Husband can justifie their frowardness; for they will not either in respect of Religion, or discretion. Not in Religion; for where God has absolutely commanded a Duty to be paid, 'tis not any unworthiness of the person can excuse from it; nor in discretion, for the worse a Husband is, the more need there is for the Wife to carry her self with that gentleness and sweetness that may be most likely to win him. This is the advice St. *Peter* gave the Wives of his time, 1 *Pet.* 3. 1. *Likewise ye Wives be in subjection to your own Husbands, that if any obey not the Word, they also may without the Word be won by the conversation of the Wives.* It seems the good behaviour of the Wives was thought a powerful means to win men from Heathenism to Christianity; and sure it might now-a-days have some good effects, if women would have but the patience to try it: At the least, 'twould have this, that 'twould keep some tolerable quiet in families; whereas on the other side, the ill fruits of the Wives unquietness are so notorious, that there are few neighbourhoods but can give some instance of it. How many men are there, that to avoid the noise of a froward Wife, have fallen to company-keeping, and by that to drunkenness, poverty, and a multitude of mischiefs? Let all Wives therefore beware of administring that temptation: But whenever there happens any thing, which, in kindness to her Husband she is to admonish him of, let it be with that softness and mildness, that it may appear 'tis love, and not anger, that makes her speak. *The Faults of the Husband acquit not from these Duties.*

12. There are also on the Husband's part several Duties: There is, first, Love, which St. *Paul* requires to be very tender and compassionate towards the Wife, as appears by the similitudes he uses in that matter, *Eph.* 5. The one, that of the Love a man bears to his natural body; *No man*, says he, *ver.* 29. *ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it, and cherisheth it.* The other Love is that Christ bears to his Church, which is far greater, *ver.* 25. Both which he sets as patterns of this Love of Husbands towards their Wives. This utterly forbids all harshness and roughness to them: Men are to use them as parts of themselves, to love them as their own bodies, and therefore to do nothing that may be hurtful and grievous to them, no more than they would cut and gash their own flesh. Let those Husbands that tyrannize over their Wives, that scarce use them like human creatures, consider whether that be to love them as their own bodies. *The Husband owes to the Wife Love.*

13. A second Duty of the Husband is Faithfulness to the bed. This is by God as well required of the Husband as the wife; and though the world do seem to look on the breach of this Duty with less abhorrence in the Husband, yet sure before that just Judge, the offence will appear no less on the man's side than the woman's. This is certain, 'tis in both a breach of the vow made to each other at their marriage, and so, besides the uncleanness, a downright perjury; and those differences in the case, which *Faithfulness.*

seem to cast the scale, are rather in respect of civil and worldly consideration, than merely of the sin.

Maintenance. 14. A third part of the Husband is to maintain and provide for the Wife. He is to let her partake with him in those outward good things wherewith God hath blessed him, and neither by niggardliness debar her of what is fit for her, nor yet by unthriftiness so waste his goods, that he shall become unable to support her. This is certainly the Duty of the Husband, who being, as hath been said, to account his Wife as a part of his own body, must have the very same care to sustain her that he hath for himself. Yet this is not so to be understood, as to excuse the Wife from her part of labour and industry, when that is requisite; it being unreasonable the Husband should toil to maintain the Wife in idleness.

Instruction. 15. Fourthly, The Husband is to instruct the Wife in the things which concern her eternal welfare, if she be ignorant of them. Thus St. *Paul* bids the *Wives learn of their Husbands at home*, 1 Cor. 14. 35. which supposes that the Husband is to teach her. Indeed it belongs to every master of a family to endeavour that all under his charge be taught all necessary things of this kind, and then sure more especially his Wife, who is so much nearer to him than all the rest. This should make men careful to get knowledge themselves, that so they may be able to perform this Duty they owe to others.

Husbands and Wives mutually to pray for, and assist each other in all Good. 16. Lastly, Husbands and Wives are mutually to pray for each other, to beg all blessings from God, both spiritual and temporal, and to endeavour all they can to do all Good to one another, especially all Good to each others souls, by stirring up to the performance of Duty, and dissuading and drawing back from all sin, and by being like true yoke-fellows, helpful and assistant to each other, in the doing of all sorts of Good, both to their own family, and all others within their reach. This is of all other the truest and most valuable love: Nay, indeed, how can it be said they do love at all, who contentedly let each other run on in a course that will bring them to eternal misery? And if the love of Husbands and Wives were thus grounded in virtue and religion, 'twould make their lives a kind of heaven on earth; 'twould prevent all those contentions and brawlings so common among them, which are the great plagues of families, and the lesser hell in passage to the greater; and truly where it is not thus founded, there is little comfort to be expected in marriage.

The Virtue of the Person the chief Consideration in Marriage. 17. It should therefore be the care of every one that means to enter upon that state, to consider advisedly before-hand, and to choose such a Person, with whom they may have this spiritual friendship, that is, such a one as truly fears God. There are many false ends of Marriage lookt upon in the world; some marry for wealth, others for beauty, and generally they are only worldly respects that are at all considered; but certainly he that would marry as he ought, should contrive to make his Marriage useful to those better ends of serving God, and saving his own soul, at least, he must be sure it be no hindrance to them; and to that purpose the Virtue of the Person chosen is more conducing than all the wealth in the world; though I deny not, but that a competency of that may likewise be considered.

Unlawful Marriages. 18. But above all things, let all take heed that they make not such Marriages, as may not not only be ill in their effects, but are actual sins at the time; such are the Marriages of those that were formerly promised to some other, in which case 'tis sure they rightly belong to those to whom they past the first promise; and then for any other to marry them during the life of that person, is to take the Husband or Wife of that other, which is direct adultery, as St. *Paul* tells us, *Rom.* 7. 3. The like unlawfulness there is also in the Marriage of those, who are within those degrees of kindred forbidden by God, the particulars whereof are set down in the 18. and 20. of *Levit.* And whoever marries any that is within any of those degrees of nearness, either to himself or to his deceased Wife, which is as bad, commits that great sin of incest; and so long as he continues to live with such his unlawful Wife, remains in that fearful guilt. This wariness in the choice of the Person to be married, would prevent many sad effects, which we daily see follow such rash or unlawful matches. It were well therefore if people would look on Marriage, as our Church advises, as a thing not to be *undertaken lightly, unadvisedly, or wantonly, to satisfie mens carnal lusts and appetites; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God*; and in so doing, no doubt a blessing would follow, which otherwise there is little ground to expect. I have now done with this relation between Husband and Wife.

Friendship. 19. The next is that between Friends: And this relation, if it be rightly founded, is of great nearness and usefulness; but there is none more generally mistaken in the world; men usually call them their Friends, with whom they have an intimacy and

frequent conversation, though that intimacy be indeed nothing but an agreement and combination in sin. The drunkard thinks him his Friend that will keep him company; the deceitful person, him that will aid him in his cheats; the proud man, him that will flatter him: And so generally in all vices, they are lookt on as Friends, that advance and further us in them. But God knows this is far from Friendship; such a Friend as this the Devil himself is in the highest degree, who is never backward in such offices. The true Friendship is that of a direct contrary making; 'tis a concurrence and agreement in virtue, not in vice; in short, a true Friend loves his Friend so, that he is very zealous of his good; and certainly he that is really so, will never be the instrument of bringing him to the greatest evil. The general Duty of a Friend then must be resolved to be the industrious pursuit of his Friend's real advantages, in which there are several particulars contain'd. *Its Duties.*

20. First, Faithfulness in all trust committed to him by his Friend, whether that of goods or secrets; he that betrays the trust of a Friend in either, is by all men lookt upon with abhorrence, it being one of the highest falsenesses and treacheries; and for such treacherous wounds the Wise man tells us, *every Friend will depart*, Ecclus. 22. 22. *Faithfulness.*

21. Secondly, 'Tis the duty of a Friend to be assisting to his Friend in all his outward needs; to counsel him when he wants advice; to chear him when he needs comfort; to give him when he wants relief; and to endeavour his rescue out of any trouble or danger. An admirable example we have of this Friendship in *Jonathan* to *David*, *He loved him as his own soul.* And we see he not only contrives for his safety, when he was in danger, but runs hazards himself to rescue and deliver his Friend, draws his father's anger upon him, to turn it from *David*, as you may read at large, 1 *Sam.* 20. *Assistance.*

22. The third and highest duty of a Friend is to be aiding and assisting to the soul of his Friend, to endeavour to advance that in piety and virtue by all means within his power; by exhortations and encouragements to all virtue, by earnest and vehement dissuasions from all sin; and not only thus in general, but by applying to his particular wants, especially by plain and friendly reproofs, where he knows or reasonably believes there is any fault committed. This is of all others the most peculiar duty of a Friend, it being indeed that which none else is qualified for. Such an unwillingness there is in most men to hear of their faults, that those that undertake that work, had need have a great prepossession of their hearts to make them patient of it: Nay, it is so generally acknowledg'd to be the proper work of a Friend, that if he omit it, he betrays the offender into security; his not reproving will be apt to make the other think he does nothing worthy of reproof, and so he tacitly acts that basest part of a flatterer, sooths and cherishes him in his sin. When yet further it is considered how great need all men have at some time or other of being admonished, 'twill appear most unfriendly, yea, a cruel thing to omit it. We have that natural partiality to our selves, that we cannot so readily discern our own miscarriages, as we do other mens, and therefore 'tis very necessary they should sometimes be shew'd us by those, who see them more clearly: And the doing this at the first may prevent the multiplying of more; whereas, if we be suffered to go unreproved, it often comes to such a habit, that reproofs will do no good. And then how shall that person be able to answer it, either to God or himself, that has by his silence betrayed his Friend to this greatest mischief? 'Tis the expression of God himself, speaking of a Friend, *Thy Friend which is as thine own soul*, Deut. 13. 6. And sure we should in this respect account our Friends as our own souls, by having the same jealous tenderness and watchfulness over their souls, which we ought to have of our own. It will therefore be very fit for all that have enter'd into any strict Friendship, to make this one special article in the agreement, That they shall mutually admonish and reprove each other; by which means it will become such an avow'd part of their Friendship, that it can never be mistaken by the reproved party for censoriousness or unkindness. *Admonition.*

23. Fourthly, To these several parts of kindness must be added that of Prayer: We must not only assist our Friends, our selves, in what we can, but we must call in the Almighty's aid to them, recommending them earnestly to God for all his blessings, both temporal and spiritual. *Prayer.*

24. Lastly, We must be constant in our Friendships, and not out of a lightness of humour grow weary of a Friend, only because we have had him long. This is great injustice to him, who, if he have behav'd himself well, ought the more to be valued, by how much the longer he has continued to do so: And it is great folly in our selves, for it is the casting away the greatest treasure of human life; for such certainly is a tried Friend. The wisest of men gives warning of it, *Prov.* 27. 10. *Thine own Friend and thy father's Friend forsake not.* Nay, further, 'tis not every light offence of *Constancy.*

of a Friend, that should make thee renounce his Friendship: There must some allowance made to the infirmities of men; and if thou hast occasion tordon him somewhat to day, perhaps thou mayst give him oppertunity to req thee to morrow; therefore nothing but unfaithfulness or incorrigible vice flld break this band.

Servants owe to their Masters Obedience. 25. The last relation is that between Masters and Servants, both whicwe Duty to each other: That of the Servant is, first, Obedience to all lawful comnds; this is expresly requir'd by the Apostle, *Eph. 6. 6. Servants, obey in all thingour Masters*, &c. And this Obedience must not be a grumbling and unwilling ot but ready and chearful, as he there proceeds to exhort, *ver.* 7. *With good will, do service*; and to help them herein, they are to consider that it is to the Lord, and nonto men. God has commanded Servants thus to obey their Masters; and therefore thebedience they pay is to God, which may well make them do it chearfully, how ha or unworthy soever the Master be, especially if what the Apostle farther urgeth, *er.* 8. be considered, *That there is a reward to be expected from God for it.*

Faithfulness. 26. The second Duty of the Servant is Faithfulness; and that may be ofvo sorts, one as opposed to eye-service, the other to purloining, or defrauding. Thfirst part of Faithfulness is the doing of all true service to his master, not only whens eye is over him, and he expects punishment for the omission, but at all times, en when his master is not likely to discern his failing; and that Servant, that doth it make conscience of this, is far from being a faithful Servant, this eye-service beii by the Apostle set opposite to that singleness of heart which he requires of Servants, *ph.* 6. 5. The second sort of Faithfulness consists in the honest managery of all things itrusted to him by his master, the not wasting his goods (as the unjust steward was aused to have done, *Luke* 16.) whether by careless embezling of them, or by conveng any of them to his own use without the allowance of his master. This latter is thapurloining of which the Apostle warns Servants, *Tit.* 2. 10. and is indeed no betteran arrant theft: Of this kind are all those ways that the Servant hath of gaining to hiself, by the loss and damage of his master, as the being bribed to make ill bargains r him, and many the like: Nay, indeed this sort of unfaithfulness is worse than ommon theft, by how much there is a greater trust reposed, the betraying whereof dds to the crime. As for the other sort of unfaithfulness, that of wasting, though ithout gain to themselves, it differs not much in effect from this, the master may lose much by the one as the other, and then what odds is it to him, whether he be robb'by the covetousness or negligence of his Servant? And it is still the same breach of trst with the former: For every master is supposed to intrust his affairs as well to the ire as the honesty of his Servant; for it would be little advantage to the master to be cured that his servant would not himself cheat him, whilst in the mean time he wold by his carelesness give opportunity to others to do it: Therefore he that does no carefully look to his master's profit, deceives his trust, as well as he that unjustly pvides for his own.

Submission to Rebuke. 27. A third Duty of a Servant is patience and meekness under the reproofsof his master, *not answering again*, as the Apostle exhorts, *Tit.* 2. 9. That is, not raking such surly and rude replies, as may increase the master's displeasure, a thing to frequent among Servants, even in the justest reprehensions: Whereas St. *Peter* lirects them patiently to suffer, even the most undeserved correction, even when tey do *well and suffer for it*, 1 Pet. 2. 20. But the patient suffering of Rebuke is not ll that is required of Servants in this matter, they must also mend the fault they are rbuked for, and not think they have done enough, when they have (though never so duifully) given the master the hearing.

Diligence. 28. A fourth Duty of a Servant is Diligence; he must constantly attend to al those things, which are the Duties of his place, and not give himself to idleness anc sloth, nor yet to company-keeping, gaming, or any other disorderly course, whicl may take him off from his master's business. All these are necessary Duties of a Srvant, which they are carefully and conscionably to perform, not so much to escape the master's anger, as God's, who will certainly call every one of them to an account how they have behav'd themselves towards their earthly masters.

Masters owe to their Servants Justice. 29. Now on the other side, there are some things also owing from the Masers to their Servants; as first, the Master is bound to be just to them, in performing those conditions on which tkey were hired; such are commonly the giving them food and wages, and that Master that withholds these is an oppressor.

Admonition. 30. Secondly, The Master is to admonish and reprove the servant in case of fault, and that not only in faults against them, wherein few Masters are backward, but also

and more especially in faults against God, whereat every Master ought to be more troubled, than at those, which tend only to his own loss, or inconvenience: The dishonour of God, and the hazard of the meanest man's soul, being infinitely more worthy our disquiet, than any thing of the other kind can be. And therefore when Masters are presently on fire for any little negligence or fault of a servant towards themselves, and yet can without trouble see him run into the greatest sins against God, 'tis a sign they consider their own concernments too much, and God's glory and their servants souls too little. This is too commonly the temper of Masters, they are generally careless how their servants behave themselves towards God, how disorderly and profane their families are, and therefore never bestow any exhortation or Admonition to persuade them to virtue, or draw them from vice; such Masters forget that they must one day give an account how they have govern'd their families. It is certainly the Duty of every ruler to endeavour to advance piety and godliness among all those that are under his charge, and that as well in this lesser dominion of a family, as in the greater of a realm or nation. Of this *David* was so careful, that we see he professes, *Psal.* 101. 7. *That no deceitful person should dwell in his house, that he that told lyes should not tarry in his sight:* So much he thought himself bound to provide, that his family might be a kind of church, an assembly of godly upright persons. And if all Masters would endeavour to have theirs so, they would, besides the eternal reward of it hereafter, find a present benefit by it, their worldly business would thrive much the better: For if their servants were brought to make conscience of their ways, they would then not dare either to be negligent or false.

31. But as it is the Duty of Masters to admonish and reprove their servants, so they must also look to do it in a due manner, that is, so as may be most likely to do good, not in passion and rage, which can never work the servant to any thing but the despising or hating him; but with such sober and grave speeches, as may convince him of his fault, and may also assure him, that it is a kind desire of his amendment, (and not a willingness to wreck his own rage) which makes the Master thus to rebuke him.

32. A third Duty of the Master is to set good Example of honesty and godliness to his servants, without which, 'tis not all the exhortations or reproofs he can use, will ever do good; or else he pulls down more with his example, than 'tis possible for him to build with the other; and 'tis madness for a drunken or profane Master to expect a sober and godly family. *Good Example.*

33. Fourthly, The Master is to provide that his servants may not want Means of being instructed in their Duty; as also that they may daily have constant times of worshipping God publickly, by having prayers in the family: But of this I have spoken before under the head of Prayer; and therefore shall here say no more of it. *Means of Instruction.*

34. Fifthly, The Master in all affairs of his own is to give reasonable and moderate Commands, not laying greater burdens on his servants, than they are able to bear; particularly not requiring so much work, that they shall have no time to bestow on their souls; as on the other side, he is not to permit them to live so idly, as may make them either useless to him, or may betray themselves to any ill. *Moderation in Commands.*

35. Sixthly, The Master is to give his servants Encouragement in Well-doing, by using them with that bounty and kindness, which their faithfulness and diligence, and piety deserve: And finally in all his dealing with them, he is to remember that himself hath, as the Apostle saith, *Ephes.* 6. 9. *a Master in heaven*, to whom he must give an account of the usage of his meanest servant on earth. Thus have I briefly run through those several relations, to which we owe particular Duty, and so have done with that first branch of Duty to our neighbours, that of justice. *Encouragement in Well-doing.*

SUNDAY XVI.

Other Branches of our Duty to our Neighbour: Of Charity to Mens Souls, Bodies, Goods, and Credit.

Sect. 1. THE Second Branch of Duty to our Neighbour, is Charity, or Love. This is the great Gospel Duty so often enjoined us by Christ; the *New Commandment*, as himself calls it, *John* 13. 34. *that ye love one another;* and this is again repeated twice in one Chapter, *John* 15. 12, 17. and the first Epistle of St. *John* *Charity.*

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is almost wholly spent in the persuasion of this one Duty; by which we may see it is no matter of indifference, but most strictly required of all that profess Christ. Indeed himself has given it as the badge and livery of his Disciples, *John* 13. 35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

In the Affections. This Charity may be considered two ways; first in respect of the Affections, secondly, of the Actions. Charity in the Affections is a sincere kindness, which disposes us to wish all good to others, and that in all their capacities, in the same manner that justice obligeth us to wish no hurt to any man, in respect either of his soul, his body, his goods, or his credit; so this first part of Charity binds us to wish all good to them in all these.

To Mens Souls. And first for the Soul. If we have any the least spark of Charity, we cannot but wish all good to mens Souls; those precious things, which Christ thought worth the ransoming with his own Blood, may surely well challenge our kindness and good wishes; and therefore, if we do not thus love one another, we are far from obeying that command of loving as he hath loved; for 'twas the Souls of Men which he loved so tenderly, and both did and suffered so much for. Of this love of his to Souls there are two great and special effects; the first the purifying them here by his grace, the second the making them everlastingly happy in his glory; and both these we are so far to copy out in our kindness, as to be earnestly desirous that all Men should arrive to that purity and holiness here, which may make them capable of eternal happiness hereafter. It were to be hoped, that none that himself carried a Soul about him, could be so cruel to that of another Man's, as not sincerely to wish this, did not experience shew us, there are some persons, whose malice is so devilish, as to reach even to the direct contrary, the wishing not only the sin, but the damnation of others. Thus may you have some, who, in any injury or oppression they suffer, make it their only comfort, that their enemies will damn themselves by it; when alas! that should to a Christian be much more terrible, than any suffering they could bring upon him. He that is of this temper is a disciple of Satan, not of Christ; it being directly contrary to the whole scope of that grand Christian precept of *loving our neighbour as our selves:* For it is sure, no man that believes there is such a thing as damnation, wishes it to himself; be he never so fond of the ways that lead to it, yet he wishes that may not be his journey's end; and therefore by that rule of Charity, should as much dread it for his neighbour.

To their Bodies, Goods, and Credit. Secondly, We are to wish all good to the Bodies of men, all health and welfare. We are generally tender enough of our own Bodies, dread the least pain or ill, that can befal them. Now Charity, by virtue of the forementioned precept, extends this tenderness to all others: And whatever we apprehend as grievous to our selves, we must be unwilling should befal another. The like is to be said of the other two, Goods and Credit, that as we wish our own thriving and reputation, so we should likewise that of others, or else we can never be said to *love our neighbour as our selves.*

Effects of this Charity. This Charity of the affections, if it be sincere, will certainly have these several Effects, which are so inseparable from it, that they are often in Scripture accounted as parts of the Duty; and so most strictly required of us: First, It will keep the mind in a peaceable and meek temper towards others; so far from seeking occasion of contentions, that no provocation shall draw us to it; for where we have kindness, we shall be unapt to quarrel, it being one of the special qualities of Charity, that it is *not easily provoked*, 1 Cor. 13. 5. And therefore whoever is unpeaceable, shews his heart is destitute of this Charity. Secondly, It will breed compassion towards all the miseries of others; every mishap that befals where we wish well, is a kind of defeat and disaster to our selves: And therefore, if we wish well to all, we shall be thus concerned in the calamities of all, have a real grief and sorrow to see any in misery, and that according to the proportion of the suffering. Thirdly, It will give us joy in the prosperities of others. *Solomon* observes, *Prov.* 13. 19. that *the desire accomplished is sweet to the soul:* And then, whoever has this real desire of his neighbour's welfare, his desire is accomplished in their prosperity, and therefore he cannot but have contentment and satisfaction in it. Both these are together commanded by St. *Paul*, Rom. 12. 15. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, weep with them that weep.* Fourthly, It will excite and stir up our prayers for others, we are of our selves impotent, feeble creatures, unable to bestow blessings where we most wish them; therefore if we do indeed desire the good of others, we must seek it on their behalf from Him, whence every *good and perfect gift cometh*, Jam. 1. 17. This is so necessary a part of Charity, that without it our kindness is but an insignificant thing, a kind of empty complement. For how can he be believed to wish well in earnest, who will not thus put life and efficacy into his

wishes, by forming them into Prayers, which will otherwise be vain and fruitless? The Apostle thought not fit to leave men to their bare wishes, but exhorts that Supplications, Prayers, and giving of Thanks *be made for all Men*, 1 Tim. 2. 1. which precept all that have this true Charity of the heart will readily conform to. These severals are so naturally the fruits of this Charity, that it is a deceit for any man to perswade himself he hath it, who cannot produce these fruits to evidence it by.

It casts out Envy. But there is yet a farther excellency of this grace; it guards the mind, and secures it from several great and dangerous vices; as first, from Envy: This is by the Apostle taught us to be the property of Charity, 1 *Cor.* 13. 4. *Charity envieth not*; and indeed common reason may confirm this to us; for Envy is a sorrow at the prosperity of another, and therefore must needs be directly contrary to that desire of it, which we shewed before was the effect of love: So that if love bear sway in the heart, 'twill certainly chase out Envy. How vainly then do those pretend to this virtue, that are still grudging and repining at every good hap of others?

Pride. Secondly, It keeps down Pride and Haughtiness. This is also taught us by the Apostle in the fore-mention'd place, *Charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up*: And accordingly we find, that where this virtue of love is commanded, there humility is joyned with it. Thus it is, *Col.* 3. 12. *Put on therefore bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind*; and *Rom.* 12. 10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love in honour preferring one another*; where you see how close an attendant humility is of love: Indeed it naturally flows from it, for love always sets a price and value upon the thing beloved, makes us esteem and prize it; thus we too constantly find it in self-love, it makes us think highly of our selves, that we are much more excellent than other men. Now if love thus placed on our selves beget Pride, let us but divert the course, and turn this love on our Brethren, and it will as surely beget humility: For then we should see and value those gifts and excellencies of theirs, which now our Pride, or our Hatred makes us to overlook and neglect, and not think it reasonable either to despise them, or vaunt and magnify our selves, upon such a comparison; we should certainly find cause to put the Apostle's Exhortation in practice, *Phil.* 2. 4. That we should *esteem others better than our selves.* Whoever therefore is of so haughty a temper, as to vilifie and disdain others, may conclude he hath not this Charity rooted in his heart.

Censoriousness. Thirdly, It casts out Censoriousness and rash judging. Charity, as the Apostle saith, 1 *Cor.* 13. 5. *thinketh no evil*, is not apt to entertain ill conceits of others; but on the contrary, as it follows, ver. 7. *Believeth all things, hopeth all things*; that is, it is forward to believe and hope the best of all men; and surely our own experience tells us the same; for where we love, we are usually unapt to discern faults, be they never so gross (witness the great blindness we generally have towards our own) and therefore shall certainly not be like to create them where they are not, or to aggravate them beyond their true size and degree; and then to what shall we impute those unmerciful censures and rash judgments of others, so frequent among men, but to the want of this Charity?

Dissembling. Fourthly, It casts out Dissembling and feigned kindness; where this true and real love is, that false and counterfeit one flies from before it: And this is the love we are commanded to have, such as *is without dissimulation*, Rom. 12. 9. Indeed where this is rooted in the heart, there can be no possible use of Dissimulation; because this is in truth all that the false one would seem to be, and so is as far beyond it, as nature is beyond art; nay, indeed as a divine virtue is beyond a foul sin; for such is that hypocritical kindness: And yet 'tis to be feared, that does too generally usurp the place of this real Charity; the effects of it are too visible among us, there being nothing more common than to see men make large professions to those whom, as soon as their backs are turned, they either deride or mischief.

Self-seeking. Fifthly, It casts out all mercenariness, and Self-seeking: 'Tis of so noble and generous a temper, that it despises all projectings for gain or advantage; *Love seeketh not her own*, 1 *Cor.* 13. 5. And therefore that huckstering kind of love, so much used in the world, which places it self only there where it may fetch in benefit, is very far from this Charity.

Revenge. Lastly, It turns out of the heart all malice and desire of Revenge, which is so utterly contrary to it, that it is impossible they should both dwell in the same breast; 'tis the property of love to *bear all things*, 1 *Cor.* 13. 7. to endure the greatest injuries without thought of making any other return to them than Prayers and Blessings; and therefore the malicious revengeful person is of all others the greatest stranger to this Charity.

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This Charity to be extended even to Enemies.

'Tis true, if this virtue were to be exercised but towards some sort of persons, it might consist with malice to others, it being possible for a man that bitterly hates one to love another: But we are to take notice that this Charity must not be so confin'd, but must extend and stretch it self to all men in the world, particularly to Enemies, or else it is not that divine Charity commended to us by Christ. The loving of friends and benefactors is so low a pitch, that the very Publicans and Sinners, the worst of men, were able to attain to it, *Mat.* 5. 46. And therefore 'tis not counted rewardable in a Disciple of Christ: No, he expects we should soar higher, and therefore hath set us this more spiritual and excellent precept of loving of Enemies, *Matt.* 5. 44. *I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;* and whoever does not thus, will never be owned by him for a Disciple. We are therefore to conclude, that all which hath been said concerning this Charity of the affections, must be understood to belong as well to our spitefullest Enemy, as our most obliging Friend. But because this is a Duty, to which the froward nature of man is apt to object much, 'twill not be amiss to insist a little on some considerations which may enforce it on us.

Motives thereunto. Command of Christ.

And first, Consider what hath been already touch'd on, that it is the Command of *Christ* both in the texts above mentioned, and multitudes of others; there being scarce any precept so often repeated in the New Testament, as this of loving and forgiving our enemies. Thus *Eph.* 4. 32. *Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another;* and again, *Col.* 3. 13. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye:* So also, 1 Pet. 3. 9. *Not rendring evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise Blessing.* A whole volume of texts might be brought to this purpose, but these are certainly enough to convince any man, that this is strictly required of us by Christ; and indeed I think there are few that ever heard of the Gospel, but know it is so. The more prodigiously strange is it, that men that call themselves Christians, should give no degree of obedience to it; nay, not only so, but even publickly avow, and profess the contrary, as we daily see they do, it being ordinary to have men resolve, and declare that they will not forgive such or such a man, and no consideration of Christ's Command can at all move them from their purpose. Certainly these men understand not what is meant by the very word *Christian,* which signifies a servant and Disciple of Christ; and this Charity is the very badge of the one, and lesson of the other. And therefore it is the greatest absurdity and contradiction to profess themselves Christians, and yet at the same time to resist this so express Command of that Christ, whom they own as their Master; *If I be a Master,* saith God, *where is my fear?* Mal. 1. 6. Obedience and reverence are so much the Duties of servants, that no man is thought to look on him as a Master, to whom he pays them not. *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* saith Christ, *Luke* 6. 46. The whole world is divided into two great families, Christ's and Satan's, and the obedience each man pays, signifies to which of these Masters he belongs; if he obey Christ, to Christ, if Satan, to Satan. Now this sin of Malice and Revenge is so much the dictate of that wicked Spirit, that there is nothing can be a more direct obeying of him; 'tis the taking his livery on our backs; the proclamation whose servants we are. What ridiculous impudence is it then, for men that have thus entered themselves of Satan's family, to pretend to be the servants of Christ? Let such know assuredly that they shall not be owned by him, but at the great day of account be turned over to their proper Master, to receive their wages in fire and brimstone.

Example of God.

A second Consideration is the Example of God: This is an argument Christ himself thought fit to use to impress this Duty on us, as you may see, *Luke* 6. 35, 36. Where after having given the Command of loving Enemies, he encourages to the practice of it, by telling, that it is that which will make us the *Children of the Highest* (that is, 'twill give us a likeness and resemblance to him, as Children have to their Parents) *for he is kind to the unthankful and the evil.* And to the same purpose you may read, *Mat.* 5. 45. *He maketh his Sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth Rain on the just and on the unjust:* And sure this is a most forcible consideration to excite us to this Duty. God, we know, is the fountain of perfection, and the being like to him, is the sum of all we can wish for; and tho' it was *Lucifer's* fall, his ambition to be like the most High, yet had the likeness he affected been only that of holiness and goodness, he might still have been an Angel of light. This desire of imitating our heavenly Father is the especial mark of a child of his. Now this kindness and goodness to Enemies is most eminently remarkable in God, and that not only in respect of the temporal mercies which he indifferently bestows on all, *his Sun and Rain on the unjust,* as in the text

forementioned, but chiefly in his spiritual mercies. We are all, by our wicked works, *Col.* 1. 21. *Enemies to him*, and the mischief of that enmity would have fallen wholly upon our selves. God had no motive, besides that of his pity to us, to wish a reconciliation; yet so far was he from returning our enmity, when he might have reveng'd himself to our eternal ruin, that he designs and contrives how he may bring us to be at peace with him. This is a huge degree of mercy and kindness; but the means he used for effecting this is yet far beyond it; he sent his own Son from Heaven to work it, and that not only by persuasions, but sufferings also: So much did he prize us miserable Creatures, that he thought us not too dear bought with the blood of his Son. The like example of mercy and patience we have in Christ, both in *laying down his Life for us Enemies*, and also in that meek manner of doing it, which we find excellently set forth by the Apostle, 1 *Pet.* 2. 22, 23, 24. and commended to our imitation. Now surely, when all this is considered, we may well make St. *John's* inference, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*, 1 John 4. 11. How shameful a thing is it for us to retain displeasures against our Brethren, when God thus lays by his towards us, and that when we have so highly provoked him?

The Disproportion between our Offences against God, and Mens against us.

This directs to a third Consideration, the comparing our sins against God, with the Offences of our Brethren against us; which we no sooner shall come to do, but there will appear a vast difference between them, and that in several respects: For, First, There is the majesty of the person against whom we sin, which exceedingly increases the guilt, whereas between man and man there cannot be so great a distance: For though some Men are by God advanc'd to such eminency of dignity, as may make an injury offer'd to them the greater, yet still they are but Men of the same nature with us, whereas he is God blessed for ever. Secondly, There is his sovereignty and power, which is original in God; for we are his Creatures, we have receiv'd our whole being from him, and therefore are in the deepest manner bound to perfect obedience: Whereas all the sovereignty that one man can possibly have over another, is but imparted to him by God, and for the most part there is none of this neither in the case, quarrels being most usual among equals. Thirdly, There is his infinite bounty and goodness to us; all that ever we enjoy, whether in relation to this life, or a better, being wholly his free gift, and so there is the foulest ingratitude added to our other Crimes; in which respect also 'tis impossible for one man to offend against another in such a degree; for though one may be (and too many are) guilty of unthankfulness towards Men, yet because the greatest benefits that Man can bestow, are infinitely short of those which God doth, the ingratitude cannot be near so great as towards God it is. Lastly, There is the greatness and multitude of our sins against God, which do infinitely exceed all that the most injurious man can do against us; for we all sin much oftner and more heinously against him, than any man, be he never so malicious, can find opportunities of injuring his Brethren. This inequality and disproportion our Saviour intimates in the Parable, *Mat.* 18. where our Offences against God are noted by the ten thousand talents, whereas our Brethrens against us are described by the hundred pence; a talent hugely outweighs a penny, and ten thousand out-numbers a hundred; yet so and much more does the weight and number of our sins exceed all the Offences of others against us. Much more might be said to shew the vast inequality between the faults which God forgives us, and those we can possibly have to forgive our Brethren: But this, I suppose, may suffice to silence all the objections of cruel and revengeful persons against this kindness to enemies. They are apt to look upon it as an absurd and unreasonable thing; but since God himself acts it in so much an higher degree, who can without blasphemy say 'tis unreasonable? If this, or any other spiritual Duty appear so to us, we may learn the reason from the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 2. 14. *The carnal Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him*; 'tis the carnality and fleshliness of our hearts that makes it seem so, and therefore instead of disputing against the Duty, let us purge our hearts of that, and then we shall find that true which the spiritual wisdom affirms of her doctrines, *Prov.* 8. 9. *They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.*

Pleasantness of this Duty.

Nay, This loving of enemies is not only a reasonable, but a pleasant Duty; and that I suppose as a fourth Consideration: there is a great deal of sweetness and delight to be found in it. Of this I confess none can so well judge as those that have practis'd it, the nature even of earthly pleasures being such, that 'tis the enjoyment only that can make a man truly know them. No man can so describe the taste of any delicious thing to another, as that by it he shall know the relish of it, he must first actually taste of it; and sure it is much more so in spiritual pleasures; and therefore he that

would fully know the sweetness and pleasantness of this Duty, let him set to the practice, and then his own experience will be the best informer. But in the mean time, how very unjust, yea, and foolish is it, to pronounce ill of it before trial? For men to say, This is irksome and intolerable, who never so much as once offer'd to try whether indeed it were so or no? Yet by this very means an ill opinion is brought up of this most delightful Duty, and passes current among men, whereas in all justice the testimony of it should be taken only from those, who have tried it; and they would certainly give another account of it.

But though the full knowledge hereof be to be had only by this nearer acquaintance, yet, methinks, even those, who look at it but at a distance, may discern somewhat of amiableness in it, if no other way, yet at least by comparing it with the uneasiness of its contrary. Malice and revenge are the most restless, tormenting passions that can possess the mind of a man; they keep men in perpetual study and care how to effect their mischievous purposes; it disturbs their very sleep, as *Solomon* observes, Prov. 4. 16. *They sleep not except they have done Mischief, and their Sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.* Yea, it imbitters all the good things they enjoy, so that they have no taste or relish of them. A remarkable example of this we have in *Haman*, who, though he abounded in all the greatness and felicity of the world, yet the malice he had to a poor despicable man, *Mordecai*, kept him from tasting contentment in all this, as you may see, *Esth.* 5. where, after he had related to his friends all his prosperities, *Ver.* 11. he concludes thus, *Ver.* 12. *Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's Gate.* On the other side, the peaceable Spirit, that can quietly pass by all injuries and affronts, enjoys a continual calm, and is above the malice of his enemies; for, let them do what they can, they cannot rob him of his quiet; he is firm as a rock, which no storms or winds can move, when the furious and revengeful man is like a wave, which the least blast tosses and tumbles from its place. But besides this inward disquiet of revengeful men, they often bring many outward calamities upon themselves, they exasperate their enemies, and provoke them to do them greater mischiefs, nay, oftentimes they willingly run themselves upon the greatest miseries in pursuit of their revenge, to which 'tis ordinary to see men sacrifice goods, ease, credit, life, nay, soul it self, not caring what they suffer themselves, so they may spight their enemy; so strangely does this wretched humour besot and blind them. On the contrary, the meek person, he often melts his adversary, pacifies his anger; *A soft Answer turneth away Wrath*, saith *Solomon*, *Prov.* 15. 1. And sure there is nothing can tend more to that end; but if it do happen that his enemy be so inhuman, that he miss of doing that, yet he is still a gainer by all he can suffer. For, first, he gains an opportunity of exercising that most Christian Grace of Charity and forgiveness, and so at once of obeying the command, and imitating the example of his Saviour, which is to a true Christian Spirit a most valuable advantage: And then, secondly, he gains an accession and increase to his reward hereafter. And if it be objected, that that is not to be reckon'd in to the present pleasure of the Duty; I answer, that the expectation and belief of it is, and that alone is a delight infinitely more ravishing, than the present enjoyment of all sensual pleasure can be.

If we forgive not, God will not forgive us.

The fourth Consideration is the dangers of not performing this Duty, of which I might reckon up divers, but I shall insist only on that great one, which contains in it all the rest, and that is the forfeiting of our own pardons from God, the having our sins against him kept still on his score, and not forgiven. This is a Consideration, that methinks should affright us into good nature; if it do not, our malice is greater to our selves than to our enemies. For alas! what hurt is it possible for thee to do to another, which can bear any comparison with that thou dost thy self, in losing the pardon of thy sins? Which is so unspeakable a mischief, that the Devil himself, with all his malice, cannot wish a greater. 'Tis all he aims at, first, that we may sin, and then that those sins may never be pardoned; for then he knows he has us sure enough, hell and damnation being certainly the portion of every unpardoned sinner, besides all other effects of God's wrath in this life. Consider this, and then tell me what thou hast got by the highest revenge thou ever actedst upon another. 'Tis a devilish phrase in the mouth of men, *That Revenge is sweet*: But is it possible there can be (even to the most distemper'd palate) any such sweetness in it, as may recompense that everlasting bitterness that attends it? 'Tis certain no man in his wits can, upon sober judging, imagine there is. But alas! we give not our selves time to weigh things, but suffer our selves to be hurried away with the heat of an angry humour, never considering how dear we must pay for it: Like the silly Bee, that in anger leaves at once her sting and

her life behind her; the sting may perhaps give some short pain to the flesh it sticks in, but yet there is none but discerns the Bee has the worst of it, that pays her life for so poor a revenge: So it is in the greatest act of our malice, we may perhaps leave our stings in others, put them to some present trouble, but that compar'd with the hurt redounds to our selves by it, is no more than that inconsiderable pain is to death; nay, not so much, because the mischiefs that we bring upon our selves are eternal, to which no finite thing can bear any proportion. Remember then, whensoever thou art contriving and plotting a revenge, that thou quite mistakest the mark; thou thinkest to hit the enemy, and alas! thou woundest thy self to death. And let no man speak peace to himself, or think that these are vain terrors, and that he may obtain pardon from God, though he give none to his brethren. For he that is truth it self hath assured us the contrary, *Matth.* 6. 15. *If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* And lest we should forget the necessity of this Duty, he has inserted it in our daily prayers, where we make it the condition on which we beg pardon from God; *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* What a heavy curse then does every revengeful person lay upon himself, when he says this prayer? He does in effect beg God not to forgive him; and 'tis too sure that part of his prayer will be heard; he shall be forgiven just as he forgives, that is, not at all. This is yet further set out to us in the parable of the Lord and the Servant, *Matth.* 18. The Servant had obtained of his Lord the forgiveness of a vast debt, ten thousand talents, yet was so cruel to his fellow-servant, as to exact a poor trifling sum of an hundred pence; upon which his Lord recalls his former forgiveness, and charges him again with the whole debt: And this Christ applies to our present purpose, *ver.* 35. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.* One such act of uncharitableness is able to forfeit us the pardon God hath granted us, and then all our sins return again upon us, and sink us to utter ruin. I suppose it needless to heap up more testimonies of Scripture for the truth of this; these are so clear, as may surely serve to persuade any man, that acknowledges Scripture, of the great and fearful danger of this sin of uncharitableness. The Lord possess all our hearts with such a just sense of it, as may make us avoid it!

Gratitude to God.

The last consideration I shall mention, is that of Gratitude. God has shew'd wonderful mercies to us, Christ has suffer'd heavy things to bring us into a capacity of that mercy and pardon from God; and shall we not then think our selves obliged to some returns of thankfulness? If we will take the Apostle's judgment, he tells us, 2 *Cor.* 5. 15. *That since Christ died for us all, 'tis but reasonable that we should not henceforth live unto our selves, but unto him that died for us.* Indeed were every moment of our life consecrated to his immediate service, 'twere no more than common Gratitude requires, and far less than such inestimable benefits deserve. What a shameful unthankfulness is it then to deny him so poor a satisfaction as this, the forgiving our brethren? Suppose a man, that were ransomed either from death or slavery by the bounty and sufferings of another, should upon his release be charg'd by him that so freed him, in return of that kindness of his, to forgive some slight debt, which was owing him by some third person, would you not think him the unthankfullest wretch in the world, that should refuse this so great a benefactor? Yet such a wretch, and much worse, is every revengeful person: Christ hath bought us out of eternal slavery, and that not with *corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with his own most precious blood,* 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. and hath earnestly recommended to us the love of our brethren, and that with the most moving arguments drawn from the greatness of his love to us, and if we shall obstinately refuse him in so just, so moderate a demand, how unspeakable a vileness is it? And yet this we do downright, if we keep any malice or grudge to any person whatsoever. Nay, farther, this is not barely an unthankfulness, but there is also join'd with it a horrible contempt and despising of him. This peace and unity of brethren was a thing so much priz'd and valu'd by him, that when he was to leave the world, he thought it the most precious thing he could bequeath, and therefore left it by way of legacy to his disciples, *John* 14. 27. *Peace I leave with you.* We use to set a great value on the slightest bequests of our dead friends, to be exceeding careful not to lose them; and therefore, if we wilfully bangle away this so precious a legacy of Christ, 'tis a plain sign we want that love and esteem of him, which we have of our earthly friends, and that we despise him as well as his legacy. The great prevailing of this sin of uncharitableness has made me stand thus long on these considerations for the subduing it. *God grant they may make such impression on the reader, as may be available to that purpose!*

I shall add only this one advice, that these or whatsoever other remedies against this sin, must be used timely; 'tis oft-times the frustrating of bodily medicines, the applying them too late; and 'tis much oftner so in spiritual: Therefore if it be possible, let these and the like considerations be so constantly and habitually fixed in thy heart, that they may frame it to such meekness as may prevent all risings of Rancour or Revenge in thee; for it is much better they should serve as armour to prevent, than as balsam to cure the wound. But if this passion be not yet so subdu'd in thee, but that there will be some stirrings of it, yet then be sure to take it at the very first rise, and let not thy fancy chew, as it were, upon the injury, by often rolling it in thy mind, but remember betimes the foregoing considerations, and withal, that this is a time and season of trial to thee, wherein thou mayst shew thou hast profited in Christ's school; there now being an opportunity offered thee, either of obeying and pleasing God, by passing by this offence of thy brother, or else of obeying and pleasing Satan, that lover of discord, by nourishing hatred against him. Remember this, I say, betimes, before thou be inflamed; for if this fire be throughly kindled, it will cast such a smoak, as will blind thy reason, and make thee unfit to judge, even in this so very plain a case, whether it be better by obeying God, to purchase to thy self eternal bliss, or by obeying Satan, eternal torments. Whereas, if thou put the question to thy self before this commotion and disturbance of mind, 'tis impossible but thy understanding must pronounce for God; and then, unless thou wilt be so perverse, that thou wilt deliberately choose death, thou wilt surely practise according to that sentence of thy understanding. I shall add no more on this first part of Charity, that of the Affections.

The first rising of Rancour to be suppressed.

Charity in the Actions.

I proceed now to that of the Actions; and this indeed is it whereby the former must be approv'd: We may pretend great Charity within, but if none break forth in the Actions, we may say of that love, as St. *James* doth of the faith he speaks of, *that it is dead*, Jam. 2. 20. It is the loving indeed that must *approve our hearts before God*, 1 John 3. 18. Now this love in the Actions may likewise fitly be distributed, as the former was, in relation to the four distinct capacities of our brethren, their souls, their bodies, their goods, and credit.

Towards the Mind of our Neighbour.

The Soul, I formerly told you, may be consider'd either in a natural, or spiritual sense; and in both of them Charity binds us to do all the good we can. As the Soul signifieth the Mind of a man, so we are to endeavour the comfort and refreshment of our brethren, desire to give them all true cause of joy and chearfulness, especially when we see any under any sadness or heaviness, then to bring out all the cordials we can procure, that is, to labour by all Christian and fit means to chear the troubled spirits of our brethren, to *comfort them that are in any heaviness*, as the Apostle speaks, 2 *Cor.* 1. 4.

His Soul.

But the Soul in the spiritual sense, is yet of greater concernment, and the securing of that is a matter of much greater moment, than the refreshing of the mind only, in as much as the eternal sorrows and sadnesses of hell exceed the deepest sorrows of this life; and therefore, though we must not omit the former, yet on this we are to employ our most zealous Charities; wherein we are not to content our selves with a bare wishing well to the Souls of our brethren, this alone is a sluggish sort of kindness, unworthy of those, who are to imitate the great Redeemer of Souls, who did and suffered so much in that purchase: No, we must add also our endeavour to make them that we wish them; to this purpose it were very reasonable to propound to our selves in all our conversings with others, that one great design of doing some good to their Souls. If this purpose were fixt in our minds, we should then discern perhaps many opportunities, which now we overlook, of doing something towards it. The brutish ignorance of one would call upon thee to endeavour his instruction; the open sin of another, to reprehend and admonish him; the faint and weak virtue of another, to confirm and encourage him. Every spiritual want of thy brother may give thee some occasion of exercising some part of this Charity: Or, if thy circumstances be such, that upon sober judging, thou think it vain to attempt any thing thy self, as if either thy meanness or thy unacquaintedness, or any the like impediment be like to render thy exhortations fruitless, yet, if thou art industrious in thy Charity, thou mayst probably find out some other instrument, by whom to do it more successfully. There cannot be a nobler study than how to benefit mens Souls, and therefore where the direct means are improper, 'tis fit we should whet our wits for attaining of others. Indeed 'tis a shame, we shou'd not as industriously contrive for this great spiritual concernment of others, as we do for every worldly trifling interest of our own; yet in them we are unwearied, and try one means after another, 'till we compass our end. But if after all our serious endeavours the obstinacy of men do not suffer us, or themselves rather, to reap any fruit from them, if all our wooings and intreatings of men

to have mercy on their own souls will not work on them, yet be sure to continue still to exhort by thy example. Let thy great care and tenderness of thy own soul preach to them the value of theirs, and give not over thy compassions to them, but with the Prophet, *Jer.* 13. 17. *Let thy soul weep in secret for them*; and with the Psalmist, *Let rivers of waters run down thine eyes, because they keep not God's Law*, Psal. 119. 136. Yea, with Christ himself weep over them, *who will not know the things that belong to their peace*, Luke 19. 42. And when no importunities with them will work, yet even then cease not to importune God for them, that he will draw them to himself. Thus we see *Samuel*, when he cou'd not dissuade the people from that sinful purpose they were upon, yet he professes notwithstanding, that he will not cease praying for them; nay, he looked on it as so much a Duty, that it wou'd be sin for him to omit it, *God forbid*, says he, *that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you*, 1 Sam. 12. 23. Nor shall we need to fear that our prayers will be quite lost; for if they prevail not for those for whom we pour them out, yet however, they will return into our own bosoms, *Psal.* 35. 13. we shall be sure not to miss of the reward of that Charity.

Charity in respect of the Body.

In the second place we are to exercise this active Charity toward the Bodies of our neighbours; we are not only to compassionate their pains and miseries, but also to do what we can for their ease and relief. The good *Samaritan*, Luke 10. had never been proposed as our pattern, had he not as well helpt as pity'd the wounded man. 'Tis not good wishes, no nor good words neither, that avail in such cases, as St. *James* tells us, *If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give him not those things that are needful for the Body, what doth it profit?* Jam. 2. 15, 16. No sure, it profits them nothing in respect of their Bodies, and it will profit thee as little in respect of thy soul; it will never be reckon'd to thee as a Charity. This relieving of the bodily wants of our brethren is a thing so strictly requir'd of us, that we find it set down, *Matth.* 25. as the especial thing we shall be try'd by at the last day, on the omission whereof is grounded that dreadful sentence, *ver.* 41. *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.* And if it shall now be asked, What are the particular acts of this kind which we are to perform? I think we cannot better inform our selves for the frequent and ordinary ones, than from this Chapter, where are set down these severals, *The giving meat to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, harbouring the stranger, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and imprisoned*. By which visiting is meant, not a bare coming to see them, but so coming as to comfort and relieve them; for otherwise it will be but like the *Levite* in the Gospel, *Luke* 10. who came and *looked on the wounded man*, but did no more, which will never be accepted by God. These are common and ordinary exercises of this Charity, for which we cannot want frequent opportunities. But besides these, there may sometimes by God's especial providence fall into our hands, occasions of doing other good offices to the Bodies of our neighbours; we may sometimes find a wounded man, with the *Samaritan*, and then 'tis our Duty to do as he did; we may sometimes find an innocent person condemn'd to death, as *Susannah* was, and then are, with *Daniel*, to use all possible endeavour for their deliverances. This case *Solomon* seems to refer to, *Prov.* 24. 11. *If thou forbear to deliver him that is drawn unto death, and them that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold we know it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? shall not he render to every man according to his deeds?* We are not lightly to put off the matter with vain excuses, but to remember that God, who knows our most secret thoughts, will severely examine whether we have willingly omitted the performance of such a Charity. Sometimes again, (nay, God knows) often now-a-days, we may see a man that by a course of intemperance, is in danger to destroy his health, to shorten his days, and then it is a due Charity, not only to the soul, but to the Body also, to endeavour to draw him from it. It is impossible to set down all the possible acts of this corporal Charity, because there may sometimes happen such opportunities as none can foresee: We are therefore always to carry about us a serious resolution of doing whatever good of this kind we shall at any time discern occasion for; and then whenever that occasion is offer'd, we are to look on it as a call, as it were, from heaven, to put that resolution in practice. This part of Charity seems to be so much implanted in our natures, as we are men, that we generally account them not only unchristian, but inhuman, that are void of it; and therefore, I hope, there will not need much persuasion to it, since our very nature inclines us; but certainly that very consideration will serve hugely to increase the guilt of those that are wanting in it: For since this command is so agreeable,

agreeable, even to flesh and blood, our disobedience to it can proceed from nothing but a stubbornness and resistance against God, who gives it.

SUNDAY XVII.

Of Charity, Alms-giving, &c. Of Charity in respect of our Neighbour's Credit, &c. Of Peace-making: Of going to Law: Of Charity to our Enemies, &c.

Charity in respect of the Goods.

Sect. 1. THE Third way of expressing this Charity is towards the Goods or Estate of our Neighbour: We are to endeavour his thriving and prosperity in these outward good things, and to that end be willing to assist and further him in all honest ways of improving or preserving them, by any neighbourly and friendly office; opportunities of this do many times fall out. A man may sometimes by his power or persuasion deliver his Neighbour's Goods out of the hands of a thief, or oppressor; sometimes again by his advice and counsel he may set him in a way of thriving, or turn him from some ruinous course; and many other occasions there may be of doing good turns to another, without any loss or damage to our selves; and then we are to do them, even to our rich Neighbours, those that are as wealthy (perhaps much more so) as our selves; for though Charity do not bind us to give to those that want less than our selves, yet whenever we can further their profit without lessening our own store, it requires it of us: Nay, if the damage be but light to us in comparison of the advantage to him, it will become us rather to hazard that light damage, than lose him that greater advantage.

Towards the Rich.

Towards the Poor.

2. But towards our poor brother, Charity tyes us to much more, we are there only to consider the supplying of his wants, and not to stick at parting with what is our own to relieve him, but, as far as we are able, give freely what is necessary to him. This duty of Alms-giving is perfectly necessary for the approving our love not only to men, but even to God himself, as St. *John* tells us, 1 *John* 3. 17. *Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* 'Tis vain for him to pretend to love either God or man, who loves his money so much better, that he will see his poor brother (who is a man, and bears the image of God) suffer all extremities, rather than part with any thing to relieve him. On the other side, the performance of this duty is highly acceptable with God, as well as with men.

3. 'Tis call'd, *Heb.* 13. 16. *A sacrifice wherewith God is well pleased;* and again, *Phil.* 4. 18. St. *Paul* calls their Alms to him, *A sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God:* And the Church hath always lookt on it as such, and therefore joyn'd it with the solemnest part of worship, the holy Sacrament. But because even sacrifices themselves under the law, were often made unacceptable by being maim'd and blemish'd, it will here be necessary to enquire what are the due qualifications of this sacrifice.

Motives of Alms-giving.

4. Of these there are some that respect the Motive, some the manner of our giving. The Motive may be three-fold, respecting God, our neighbour, and our selves. That which respects God, is obedience and thankfulness to him: He has commanded we should give Alms, and therefore one special end of our doing so must be the obeying that precept of his. And it is from his bounty alone that we receive all our plenty; and this is the properest way of expressing our thankfulness for it, for, as the Psalmist saith, *Our goodness extendeth not unto God,* Psal. 16. 2. That tribute which we desire to pay out of our estates, we cannot pay to his person. 'Tis the poor that are, as it were, his proxy and receivers, and therefore whatever we should by way of thankfulness give back again unto God, our Alms is the way of doing it. Secondly, In respect of our neighbour, the Motive must be a true love and compassion to him, a tender fellow-feeling of his wants, and desire of his comfort and relief. Thirdly, In respect of our selves, the Motive is to be the hope of that eternal reward promised to this performance. This Christ points out to us, when he bids us *lay up our treasures in heaven,* Matth. 6. 20. and to *make us friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that they may receive us into everlasting habitations;* Luke 16. 9. that is, by a charitable dispensing of our temporal goods to the poor, to lay up a stock in heaven, to gain a title to those endless felicities, which God hath promised to the charitable. That is

the harvest we must expect of what we sow in these works of mercy, which will be so rich, as would abundantly recompense us, though we should, as the Apostle speaks, 1 *Cor.* 13. 3. *Bestow all our goods to feed the poor*: But then we must be sure we make this our sole aim, and not instead of this, propose to our selves the praise of men, as the Motive of our Charity, that will rob us of the other; this is expresly told us by Christ, *Matt.* 6. They that set their hearts on the credit they shall gain with men, must take that as their portion, *ver.* 3. *Verily I say unto you they have their reward*; they choose, it seems, rather to have men their pay-masters, than God, and to them they are turn'd off; that little airy praise they get from them is all the reward they must expect: *Ye have no reward of my Father which is in heaven*, ver. 1. We have therefore need to watch our hearts narrowly, that this desire of vain-glory steal not in, and befool us into that miserable exchange of a vain blast of mens breath, for those substantial and eternal joys of heaven.

5. In the second place, we must take care of our Alms-giving in respect of the Manner: And in that, first, we must give chearfully. Men usually value a small thing that is given chearfully, and with a good heart, more than a much greater, that is wrung from a man with grudging and unwillingness; and God is of the same mind, he *loves a chearful giver*, 2 Cor. 9. 7. which the Apostle makes the reason of the foregoing exhortation of not *giving grudgingly, or as of necessity*, ver. 6. And sure 'tis no unreasonable thing, that is herein requir'd of us; there being no duty that has to human nature more of pleasure and delight, unless it be where covetousness or cruelty have quite worked out the man, and put a ravenous beast in his stead. Is it not a most ravishing pleasure to him that hath any bowels, to see the joy that a seasonable Alms brings to a poor wretch? How it revives and puts new spirits in him, that was even sinking? Certainly the most sensual creature alive knows not how to bestow his money on any thing that shall bring him in so great a delight, and therefore methinks it should be no hard matter to give, not only without grudging, but even with a great deal of alacrity and chearfulness, it being the fetching in of pleasure to our selves.

Manner of Alms-giving. Chearfully.

6. There is but one objection can be made against this, and that is, that the danger of Impoverishing one's self by what one gives, may take off that pleasure, and make men either not give at all, or not so chearfully. To this I answer, That, first, were this hazard never so apparent, yet it being the command of God, that we shall thus give, we are yet to obey chearfully, and be as well content to part with our goods in pursuance of this duty, as we are many times called to do upon some other. In which case Christ tells us, *He that forsakes not all that he hath, cannot be his disciple.*

The Fear of Impoverishing our selves by it, vain and impious.

7. But secondly, This is sure a vain supposition, God having particularly promised the contrary to the charitable; that it shall bring blessings on them, even in these outward things. *The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself*, Prov. 11. 25. *He that giveth to the poor shall not lack*, Prov. 28. 27. And many the like texts there are, so that one may truly say, this objection is grounded in direct unbelief. The short of it is, we dare not trust God for this. Giving to the poor is directly the putting out wealth into his hands, *He that giveth to the poor lendeth unto the Lord*, Prov. 19. 17. and that too on solemn promise of repayment, as it follows in that verse, *That which he hath given will he pay him again.* It is amongst men thought a great disparagement, when we refuse to trust them: It shews we either think them not sufficient, or not honest. How vile an affront is it then to God thus to distrust him? Nay, indeed how horrid blasphemy, to doubt the security of that, for which he hath thus expresly passed his word, who is Lord of all, and therefore cannot be insufficient, and who is the God of truth, and therefore will not fail to make good his promise? Let not then that infidel Fear of future want contract and shut up thy bowels from thy poor brother; for though he be never likely to pay thee, yet God becomes his Surety, and enters bond with him, and will most assuredly pay thee with increase. Therefore it is so far from being damage to thee, thus to give, that it is thy great advantage. Any man would rather choose to put his money in some sure hand, where he may both improve, and be certain of it at his need, than to let it lie unprofitable by him, especially if he be in danger of thieves or other accidents, by which he may probably lose it. Now, alas! all that we possess is in minutely danger of losing; innumerable accidents there are, which may in an instant bring a rich man to beggary; he that doubts this, let him but read the story of *Job*, and he will there find an example of it. And therefore what so prudent course can we take

for

for our wealth, as to put it out of the reach of those accidents, by thus lending it to God, where we may be sure to find it ready at our greatest need, and that too with improvement and increase? In which respect it is that the Apostle compares Alms to seed, 2 *Cor.* 9. 10. We know it is the nature of seed that is sown to multiply and increase, and so do all our acts of mercy, they return not single and naked to us, but bring in their sheaves with them, a most plenteous and bountiful harvest. God deals not with our Alms as we too often do with his graces, wrap them up in a napkin, so that they shall never bring in any advantage to us, but makes us most rich returns: And therefore we have all reason most chearfully, yea, joyfully to set to this Duty, which we have such invitations to, as well in respect of our own interests, as our neighbour's needs.

Give seasonably. 8 Secondly, We must give seasonably: It is true indeed, there are some so poor, that an Alms can never come unseasonably, because they always want; yet even to them there may be some special seasons of doing it to their greater advantage: For sometimes an Alms may not only deliver a poor man from some present extremity, but by the right timing of it, may set him in some way of a more comfortable subsistence afterwards. And for the most, I presume it is a good rule to dispense what we intend to any as soon as may be, for delays are hurtful oftentimes both to them and our selves; first, as to them, it is sure the longer we delay, the longer they groan under the present want, and after we have design'd them a relief, it is in some degree a cruelty to defer bestowing of it; for so long we prolong their sufferings. You will think him a hard-hearted physician, that having a certain cure for a man in pain, should, when he might presently apply it, make unnecessary delays, and so keep the poor man still in torture: And the same it is here; we want of the due compassion, if we can be content our poor Brother should have one hour of unnecessary suffering, when we have present opportunity of relieving him: Or, if he be not in such an extremity of want, yet whatever we intend him for his greater comfort, he loses so much of it, as the time of the delay amounts to. Secondly, In respect of our selves, 'tis ill to defer; for thereby we give advantage to the temptations either of Satan, or our own covetous humour to dissuade us from it. Thus it fares too often with many Christian Duties; for want of a speedy execution our purposes cool, and never come to act; so many resolve they will repent, but because they set not immediately upon it, one delay succeeds another, and keeps them from ever doing it at all; and so 'tis very apt to fall out in this case, especially with men, who are of a covetous temper; and therefore they of all others should not trust themselves thus to delay.

Prudently. 9. Thirdly, We should take care to give Prudently, that is, to give most where it is most needed, and in such a manner as may do the receiver most good. Charities do often miscarry for want of this care; for if we give at all adventures to all that seem to want, we may sometimes give more to those, whose sloth and lewdness is the cause of their want, than to those who best deserve it, and so both encourage the one in their idleness, and disable our selves from giving to the other. Yet I doubt not such may be the present wants even of the most unworthy, that we are to relieve them: But where no such pressing need is, we shall do best to chuse out the fitter objects of Charity, such as are those, who either are not able to labour, or else have a greater charge than their labour can maintain; and to those our Alms should be given also in such manner as may be most likely to do them good; the manner of which may differ according to the circumstances of their condition. It may to some be best perhaps, to give them by little and little, to others the giving it all at once may tend more to their benefit; and sometimes a seasonable loan may do as well as a gift, and that may be in the power sometimes of those, who are able to give but little: But when we thus lend on Charity, we must lend freely without use, and also with a purpose, that if he should prove unable to pay, we will forgive so much of the principal as his needs require, and our abilities will permit. They want much of this Charity, who clap up poor debtors in prison, when they know they have nothing to answer the debt, which is a great cruelty, to make another miserable, when nothing is gain'd to our selves by it.

10. Fourthly, We should give liberally, we must not be strait-handed in our Alms, and give by such pitiful scantlings, as will bring almost no relief to the receiver, for that is a kind of mockery; 'tis as if one should pretend to feed one that is almost famished, by giving him a crumb of bread: Such doles as that would be most ridiculous, yet I fear 'tis too near the proportion of some mens Alms; such men are below those Disciples we read of, who knew only the Baptism of *John*, for 'tis to be observ'd,

 that

that *John Baptist*, who was but the fore-runner of Christ, makes it a special part of his Doctrine, that he *that hath two Coats should impart to him that hath none*, Luke 3. 11. He says not, he that hath some great wardrobe, but even he that hath but two coats must part with one of them; from whence we may gather, that whatsoever is above (not our vanity, but) our need, should thus be dispos'd of, when our Brethrens necessity requires it. But if we look into the first times of the Gospel, we shall find Christianity far exceeded this proportion of *John's*; the converts assigned not a part only, but frankly *gave all to the Use of the Brethren*, Acts 4. And tho' that, being upon an extraordinary occasion, will be no measure of our constant practice, yet it may shew us how prime and fundamental a part of Christianity this of Charity is, that at the very first founding of the Church, such vast degrees of it were practised; and if we farther consider what precepts of love are given us in the Gospel, even to the *laying down our Lives for the Brethren*, 1 John 3. 16. we cannot imagine our goods are in God's account so much more precious than our lives, that he would command us to be prodigal of the one, and yet allow us to be sparing of the other.

11. A multitude of arguments might be brought to recommend this bounty to all that profess Christ; I shall mention only two, which I find used by St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians* on this occasion. The first is the example of Christ, 2 Cor. 8. 9. *For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his Poverty might be rich.* Christ emptied himself of all that glory and greatness he enjoy'd in Heaven with his father, and submitted himself to a life of much meanness and poverty, only to enrich us. And therefore, for shame, let us not grudge to empty our coffers, to lessen somewhat of our heaps, to relieve his poor members. The second is the expectation of reward, which will be more, or less, according to the degrees of our Alms, 2 *Cor.* 9. 6. *He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.* We think him a very improvident husbandman, that, to save a little seed at present, sows so thin as to spoil his crop; and the same folly 'twill be in us, if by the sparingness of our Alms, we make our selves a lank Harvest hereafter, lose either all, or a great part of those rewards which God hath provided for the liberal Alms-giver. What is the proportion which may be call'd a liberal giving, I shall not undertake to set down, there being degrees even in liberality; one may give liberally, and yet another give more liberally than he; besides, liberality is to be measured, not so much by what is given, as by the ability of the giver. A man of a mean estate may give less than one of a great, and yet be the more liberal person, because that little may be more out of his, than the greater is out of the other's. Thus we see Christ pronounceth the poor Widow *to have given much more to the Treasury, than all the rich Men*, Luke 21. 3. not that her two *mites* were more than their rich gifts, but that it was more for her, she having left nothing behind, whereas they gave out of their abundance what they might easily spare. Every man must herein judge for himself; we see the Apostle, tho' he earnestly press the *Corinthians* to bounty, yet prescribes not to them how much they shall give, but leaves that to their own breasts, 2 *Cor.* 9. 7. *Every man according as he purposeth in his Heart, so let him give.* But let us still remember, that the more we give (provided we do not thereby fail in the support of those, that most immediately depend on us) the more acceptable it will be to God, and the more rewardable by him. And to secure the performance of the Duty of Alms-giving (whatever the proportion be) we may do very well to follow the advice St. *Paul* gives the *Corinthians* in this matter, 1 *Cor.* 16. 2. *Upon the first Day of the Week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.* If men would do thus, lay by somewhat weekly in store for this work of Charity, it were the surest way not to be unprovided of somewhat to give, when an occasion offer'd itself, and by giving so by little and little, the expence would become less sensible, and so be a means to prevent those grudgings and repinings, which are apt to attend men in greater disbursments: And sure this were in other respects also a very proper course; for when a Tradesman casts up his weekly account, and sees what his gains have been, 'tis of all others the most seasonable time to offer this tribute to God out of what he hath by his blessing gained. If any will say, they cannot so well weekly reckon their gains, as by longer spaces of time, I shall not contend with them for that precise time, let it be done monthly or quarterly, so it be done. But that somewhat should still be laid by in bank for these uses, rather than left loose to our sudden Charities, is sure very expedient; and I doubt not whoever will make tryal of it, will upon experience acknowledge it to be so.

12. The

Charity in respect of the Credit.

12. The fourth exercise of our Charity is towards the Credit of our neighbour: And of this we may have many occasions; sometimes towards the innocent, and sometimes also towards the guilty. If one, whom we know to be an innocent person, be slandered, and traduced, Charity binds us to do what we may for the declaring his innocency, and delivering him from that false imputation, and that not only by witnessing when we are called to it, but by a voluntary offering our testimony on his behalf; or if the accusation be not before a court of justice, and so there be no place for that our more solemn testimony, but that it be only a slander tost from one to another, yet even there we are to do what we can to clear him, by taking all occasions publickly to declare what we know of his innocency. But even to the guilty there is some Charity of this kind to be performed, sometimes by concealing the fault, if it be such that no other part of Charity to others make it necessary to discover it, or it be not so notorious, as that it will be sure to betray itself. The wounds of reputation are of all others the most incurable, and therefore it may well become Christian Charity to prevent them, even where they have been deserved; and perhaps such a tenderness in hiding the fault may sooner bring the offender to repentance, if it be seconded (as it ought to be) with all earnestness of private admonition. But if the fault be such, that it be not to be conceal'd, yet still there may be place for this Charity, in extenuating and lessening it, as far as the circumstances will bear: As if it were done suddenly and rashly, Charity will allow some abatement of the censure, which would belong to a designed and deliberate act; and so proportionably in other circumstances. But the most frequent exercises of this Charity happen toward those, of whose either innocency or guilt we have no knowledge, but are by some doubtful actions brought under suspicion: And here we must remember, that it is the property of love not to think evil, to judge the best; and therefore we are both to abstain from uncharitable conclusions of them our selves, and, as much as lies in us, to keep others from them also, and so endeavour to preserve the credit of our neighbour, which is oftentimes as much shaken by unjust suspicions, as it would be by the truest accusation. To these cases, I suppose, belongs that precept of Christ, *Matt.* 7.1. *Judge not*: And when we consider how that is back'd in the following words, *That ye be not judged*, we shall have cause to believe it no such light matter as the world seems to account it; our unmerciful judging of others will be paid home to us, in the strict and severe judgment of God.

The Acts of Charity in some Respects Acts of Justice also.

13. I have now gone thro' this active Charity, as it relates to the four several capacities of our Brethren, many of the particulars whereof were before briefly mentioned, when we spake of Justice. If any think it improper, that the same Acts should be made part of Justice, and Charity too, I shall desire them to consider, that Charity being by Christ's command become a debt to our Brethren, all the parts of it may in that respect be ranked under the head of Justice, since 'tis sure, paying of debts is a part of that: Yet because in our common use we do distinguish between the offices of Justice and Charity, I have chose to enlarge on them in particular reference to Charity. But I desire it may still be remembred, that whatsoever is under precept, is so much a due from us, that we sin not only against Charity, but Justice too, if we neglect it; which deserves to be considered, the more to stir up our care to the performance, and the rather, because there seems to be a common error in this point. Men look upon their Acts of mercy as things purely voluntary, that they have no obligation to, and the effect of it is this, that they are apt to think very highly of themselves, when they have performed any, though never so mean; but never blame themselves, though they omit all: Which is a very dangerous, but withal, a very natural fruit of the former persuasion. If there be any Charities, wherein Justice is not concerned, they are those which, for the height and degrees of them, are not made matter of strict Duty, that is, are not in those degrees commanded by God: And even after these, 'twill be very reasonable for us to labour; but that cannot be done without taking the lower and necessary degrees in our way; and therefore, let our first care be for them.

The great Rule of Charity.

14. To help us wherein there will be no better means, than to keep before our eyes that grand Rule of *loving our Neighbours as our selves*: This the Apostle makes the sum of our whole Duty to our neighbours, *Rom.* 13. 9. Let this therefore be the standard, whereby to measure all thy Actions which relate to others; whenever any necessity of thy neighbours presents itself to thee, ask thy self, Whether if thou wert in the like case, thy love to thy self would not make thee industrious for relief, and then resolve thy love to thy neighbour must have the same effect for him. This is

that royal law, as St. *James* calls it, *Jam.* 2. 8. which all that profess themselves subjects to Christ, must be ruled by; and whosoever is so, will not fail of performing all Charities to others, because 'tis sure he would upon the like occasions have all such performed to himself. There is none but wishes to have his good name defended, his poverty reliev'd, his bodily suffering succour'd; only it may be said, that in the spiritual wants there are some so careless of themselves, that they wish no supply, they desire no reproofs, no instructions: nay, are angry when they are given them: It may, therefore, seem that such men are not by virtue of this Rule tyed to those sorts of Charities. To this I answer, That the love of our selves, which is here set as the measure of that to our neighbour, is to be understood to be that reasonable love, which men ought to have, and therefore, though a man fail of that due love he owes himself, yet his neighbour hath not thereby forfeited his right; he has still a claim to such a degree of our love, as is answerable to that, which in right we should bear to our selves, and such I am sure is this care of our spiritual estate; and therefore it is not our despising our own souls, that will absolve us from Charity to other mens: Yet I shall not much press this Duty in such men, it being neither likely that they will be persuaded to it, or do any good by it; their ill example will overwhelm all their good exhortations, and make them unfruitful.

Peace-making.

15. There is yet one act of Charity behind, which doth not properly fall under any one of the former heads, and yet may relate to them all, and that is, the making peace and amity among others; by doing whereof we may much benefit both the souls, bodies, goods, and credit of our Brethren; for all these are in danger by strife and contention. The reconciling of enemies is a most blessed work, and brings a blessing on the actors; we have Christ's word for it, *Blessed are the Peace-makers*, *Matt.* 5. 9. and therefore we may be encouraged diligently to lay hold of all opportunities of doing this office of Charity, to use all our art and endeavour, to take up all grudges and quarrels we discern among others; neither must we only labour to restore peace where it is lost, but to preserve it where it is; first, generally, by striving to beget in the hearts of all we converse with a true value of that most precious jewel, peace. Secondly, particularly, by a timely prevention of those jars and unkindnesses we see likely to fall out. It may many times be in the power of a discreet friend or neighbour to cure those mistakes and misapprehensions, which are the first beginnings of quarrels and contentions; and it will be both more easy, and more profitable, thus to prevent, than pacify strifes. 'Tis sure 'tis more easy, for when a quarrel is once broken out, 'tis like a violent flame, which cannot so soon be quenched, as it might have been, whilst it was but a smothering fire. And then it is also more profitable; for it prevents many sins, which in the progress of an open contention are almost sure to be committed. *Solomon* says, *In the multitude of Words there wanteth not sin*, Prov. 10. 19. Which cannot more truly be said of any sorts of words, than those that pass in anger, and then, tho' the quarrel be afterwards composed, yet those sins will still remain on their account; and therefore it is a great Charity to prevent them.

He that undertakes it, must be peaceable himself.

16. But to fit a man for this so excellent an office of peace-making, 'tis necessary that he be first remarkably peaceable himself: For with what face canst thou persuade others to that which thou wilt not perform thy self? Or, how canst thou expect thy persuasions should work? It will be a ready reply in every man's mouth, *Thou Hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, Matt.* 7. 5. and therefore be sure thou qualify thy self for the work. There is one point of peaceableness, which seems to be little regarded among men, and that is in the case of legal trespasses; men think it nothing to go to Law about every petty trifle; and as long as they have but Law on their side, never think they are to blame: But sure, had we that true peaceableness of spirit which we ought, we should be unwilling for such slight matters to trouble and disquiet our neighbours. Not that all going to Law is utterly unchristian, but such kind of suits, especially as are upon contentiousness, and stoutness of humour, to defend such an inconsiderable right, as the parting with will do us little or no harm, or, which is yet worse, to avenge such a trespass. And even in great matters, he that shall part with somewhat of his right for love of peace, does surely the most Christianly, and most agreeably to the advice of the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 6. 7. *Rather to take wrong, and suffer our selves to be defrauded.* But if the damage be so insupportable, that it is necessary for us to go to Law, yet even then we must take care of preserving peace, first, by carrying still a friendly and christian temper towards the party, not suffering our hearts to be at all estranged from him: Secondly, by being willing to yield to any rea-

Of going to Law.

reasonable terms of agreement, whenever they shall be offer'd, and truly, if we carry not this temper of mind in our suits, I see not how they can be reconcileable with that peaceableness so strictly required of all Christians. Let those consider this, who make it their pleasure themselves to disquiet their neighbour, or their trade to stir up others to do it. This tender regard of peace, both in our selves and others, is absolutely necessary to be entertained of all those, who own themselves to be the servants of him, whose title it is to be the *Prince of Peace*, Isa. 9. 6.

This Charity of the Actions must reach to Enemies.

17. All that remains to be touched on concerning this Charity of the Actions is the extent of it, which must be as large as the former of the affections, even to the taking in, not only strangers, and those of no relation to us, but even of our bitterest Enemies. I have already spoken so much of the obligation we are under to forgive them, that I shall not here say any thing of that; but that being supposed a Duty, 'twill sure then appear no unreasonable thing to proceed one step further, by doing them good turns: For when we have once forgiven them, we can then no longer account them Enemies, and so 'twill be no hard matter, even to flesh and blood, to do all kind things to them. And indeed this is the way, by which we must try the sincerity of our forgiveness. 'Tis easy to say, I forgive such a man, but if, when an opportunity of doing him good is offered, thou declinest it, 'tis apparent there yet lurks the old malice in thy heart; where there is a thorough forgiveness, there will be as great a readiness to benefit an Enemy, as a Friend; nay, perhaps, in some respects, a greater, a true charitable person looking upon it as an especial prize, when he has an opportunity of evidencing the truth of his reconciliation, and obeying the precept of his Saviour, *by doing good to them that hate him*, *Matt.* 5. 44. Let us therefore resolve that all actions of kindness are to be performed to our Enemies, for which we have not only the command, but also the example of Christ, who had not only some inward relentings towards us his obstinate and most provoking Enemies, but shewed it in acts, and those no cheap, or easie ones, but such as cost him his dearest blood. And surely we can never pretend to be either obeyers of his command, or followers of his example, if we grudge to testifie our loves to our Enemies, by those so much cheaper ways of *Feeding them in Hunger*, and the like, recommended to us by the Apostle, *Rom.* 12. 20. But if we could perform these acts of kindness to Enemies in such manner as might draw them from their enmity, and win them to peace, the Charity would be doubled; and this we should aim at, for that we see the Apostle sets as the end of the forementioned acts of feeding, *&c.* that we may *heap coals of fire on their heads*, not coals to burn, but to melt them into all love and tenderness towards us; and this were indeed the most compleat way of imitating Christ's example, who in all he did, and suffered for us, designed the reconciling of us to himself.

Self-love an hindrance to this Charity.

18 I have now shewed you the several parts of our Duty to our neighbour, towards the performance whereof I know nothing more necessary, than the turning out of our hearts that Self-love, which so often possesses them; and that so wholly, that it leaves no room for Charity, nay, nor justice neither to our neighbour. By this Self-love I mean not that true love of our selves, which is the love and care of our souls (for that would certainly help, not hinder us in this Duty) but I mean that immoderate love of our own worldly interests and advantages, which is apparently the root of all both injustice and uncharitableness towards others. We find this sin of Self-love set by the Apostle in the head of a whole troop of sins, 2 *Tim.* 3. 2. as if it were some principal officer in Satan's camp; and certainly not without reason, for it never goes without an accursed train of many other sins, which like the dragon's tail, *Rev.* 12. 4. sweeps away all care of Duty to others. We are by it made so vehement and intent upon the pleasing our selves, that we have no regard to any body else, contrary to the direction of St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 15. 2. which is, not to please our selves, *but every Man to please his Neighbour for his good to edification;* which he backs with the example of Christ, Ver. 3 *For even Christ pleased not himself.* If therefore we have any sincere desire to have this virtue of Charity rooted in our hearts, we must be careful to weed out this sin of Self-love, for 'tis impossible they can prosper together.

Prayer a Means to procure it.

19. But when we have removed this hindrance, we must remember, that this, as all other Graces, proceeds not from our selves, it is the gift of God, and therefore we must earnestly pray to him to work it in us, to send his Holy Spirit which once appeared in the form of a Dove, a meek and gall-less creature, to frame our hearts to the same temper, and enable us rightly to perform this Duty.

20. I have

20. I have now past through those several branches I at first proposed, and shewed you what is our Duty to God, our selves, and our neighbour; of which I may say, as it is, *Luke* 10. 28. *This do and thou shalt live.* And surely it is no impossible task to perform this in such a measure as God will graciously accept; that is, in sincerity, though not in perfection; for God is not that austere master, *Luke* 19. 20. *that reaps where he hath not sown*; he requires nothing of us, which he is not ready by his grace to enable us to perform, if we be not wanting to our selves, either in asking it by prayer, or in using it by diligence. And as it is not impossible, so neither is it such a sad melancholy task, as men are apt to think it. 'Tis a special policy of Satan's to do as the Spies did, *Numb.* 23. 28. *Bring up an ill report upon this good Land*; this state of Christian life, thereby to discourage us from entring into it, to fright us with I know not what giants we shall meet with: But let us not thus be cheated, let us but take the courage to try, and we shall indeed find it a *Canaan, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey*; God is not in this respect to his people *a Wilderness, a Land of Darkness*, Jer. 2. 31. His service does not bereave men of any true joy, but helps them to a great deal: Christ's yoke is an easy, nay, a pleasant yoke, his burden a light, yea, a gracious burden. There is in the practice of Christian Duties, a great deal of present pleasure; and if we feel it not, it is because of the resistance our vicious and sinful customs make, which by the contention raises an uneasiness. But then, first, that is to be charged only on our selves, for having got those ill customs, and thereby made that hard to us, which in itself is most pleasant, the Duties are not to be accused for it. And then, secondly, even there the pleasure of subduing those ill habits, overcoming those corrupt customs, is such, as hugely outweighs all the trouble of the combat.

Christian Duties both possible and pleasant.

21. But it will perhaps be said, that some parts of piety are of such a nature, as will be very apt to expose us to persecutions and Sufferings in the world; and that those are not joyous, but grievous.

Even when they expose us to outward Sufferings.

I answer, That even in those there is matter of joy, we see the Apostles thought it so; *They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's Name*, Acts 5. 41. And St. *Peter* tells us, *That if any suffer as a Christian, he is to glorifie God for it*, 1 Pet. 4. 16. There is such a force and virtue in the testimony of a good conscience, as is able to change the greatest Suffering into the greatest triumph; and that testimony we can never have more clear and lively, than when we suffer for righteousness sake. So that you see Christianity is very amiable even in its saddest dress; the inward comforts of it do far surpass all the outward tribulations that attend it, and that even in the instant, while we are in the state of warfare upon earth: but then if we look forward to the crown of our victories, those eternal rewards in Heaven, we can never think those tasks sad, tho' we had nothing at present to sweeten them, that have such recompences await them at the end; were our labours never so heavy, we could have no cause to faint under them. Let us therefore, whenever we meet with any discouragements in our course, fix our eye on this rich prize, and then *run with patience the race which is set before us*, Heb. 12. 1. Follow the captain of our salvation through the greatest Sufferings, yea, even through the same Red sea of blood, which he hath waded, whenever our obedience to him shall require it: For though our fidelity to him should bring us to death itself, we are sure to be no losers by it; for to such he hath promised a crown of life, the very expectation whereof is able to keep a Christian more chearful in his fetters and dungeon, than a worldling can be in the midst of his greatest prosperities.

22. All that remains for me farther to add, is earnestly to intreat and beseech the reader, that without delay he put himself into this so pleasant and gainful a course, by setting sincerely to the practice of all those things, which either by this Book, or by any other means he discerns to be his Duty; and the further he hath formerly gone out of his way, the more haste it concerns him to make to get into it, and to use the more diligence in walking in it. He that hath a long journey to go, and finds he hath lost a great part of his day in a wrong way, will not need much intreaty, either to turn into the right, or to quicken his pace in it. And this is the case of all those that have lived in any course of sin, they are in a wrong road, which will never bring them to the place they aim at; nay, which will certainly bring them to the place they most fear and abhor; much of their day is spent, how much will be left to finish their journey in, none knows, perhaps, the next hour, the next minute, the night of death may overtake them. What a madness is it then for them to defer one moment to

The Danger of delaying our turning to God.

turn

turn out of that path which leads to certain destruction, and to put themselves in that which will bring them to bliss and glory? Yet so are men bewitched and inchanted with the deceitfulness of sin, that no intreaty, no persuasion can prevail with them to make this so reasonable, so necessary a change; not but that they acknowledge it needful to be done, but they are unwilling to do it yet, they would enjoy all the pleasures of sin as long as they live, and then they hope at their death, or some little time before it, to do all the business of their Souls. But alas! Heaven is too high to be thus jump'd into, the way to it is a long and leisurely ascent, which requires time to walk. The hazards of such deferring are more largely spoken of in the discourse of Repentance; I shall not here repeat them, but desire the reader seriously to lay them to heart, and then surely he will think it seasonable counsel that is given by the Wise man, Ecclus 5. 7. *Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day.*

F I N I S.

PRIVATE DEVOTIONS FOR SEVERAL OCCASIONS ORDINARY and EXTRAORDINARY.

Christian Reader,

I Have, *for the help of thy Devotions, set down some* Forms of Private Prayer, *upon* several Occasions: *If it be thought an omission that there are none for Families, I must answer for my self, that it was not from any opinion, that God is not as well to be worshipped in the Family, as the Closet; but because the providence of God and the Church hath already furnished thee for that purpose, infinitely beyond what my utmost care could do; I mean, the* Publick Liturgy, *or* Common Prayer, *which, for all publick addresses to* God *(and such are family Prayers) are so excellent and useful, that we may say of it, as* David *did of* Goliath's *sword*, 1 Sam. 21. 9. There is none like it.

DIRECTIONS for the MORNING.

As soon as ever thou awakest in the Morning, lift up thy heart to God in this, or the like short Prayer:

LORD, as thou hast awaked my body from sleep, so by thy grace awaken my soul from sin; and make me so to walk before thee this day, and all the rest of my life, that when the last trumpet shall awake me out of my grave, I may rise to life immortal, through Jesus Christ.

WHEN *thou hast thus begun, suffer not (without some urgent necessity) any worldly thoughts to fill thy mind, 'till thou hast also paid thy more solemn Devotions to Almighty God; and therefore during the time thou art dressing thy self, (which should be no longer than common decency requires) exercise thy mind in some spiritual thoughts: As for example, consider to what* Temptations *thy* business *or* company *that day are most like to lay thee open, and arm thy self with resolutions against them; or again, consider what* occasions of doing service *to God, or good to thy neighbour, are that day most likely to present themselves, and resolve to embrace them, and also contrive how thou mayest improve them to the uttermost. But especially, it will be fit for thee to examine whether there have any sin escaped thee since thy last night's examination. If after these considerations any further leisure remain, thou mayest profitably employ it in meditating on the general* Resurrection *(whereof our rising from our beds is a representation) and of that dreadful* Judgment *which shall follow it, and then think with thy self in what preparation thou art for it, and resolve to husband carefully every minute of thy time towards the fitting thee for that great account. As soon as thou art ready, retire to some private place, and there offer up to God thy morning sacrifice of Praise and Prayer.*

PRAYERS for the MORNING.

At thy first kneeling down, say,

O Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God, have mercy upon me a miserable sinner.

LORD,

LORD, I know not what to pray for as I ought, O let thy Spirit help my infirmities, and enable me to offer up a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to thee by Jesus Christ.

A Thanksgiving.

O Gracious Lord, whose mercies endure for ever, I thy unworthy servant, who have so deeply tasted of them, desire to render thee the tribute of my humblest praises for them. In thee, O Lord, I live, and move, and have my being: Thou first madest me to be, and then that I might not be miserable, but happy, thou sentest thy Son out of thy bosom to redeem me from the power of my sins by his grace, and from the punishment of them by his Blood, and by both to bring me to his glory. Thou hast by thy mercy caused me to be born within thy peculiar fold, the Christian Church, where I was early consecrated to thee in Baptism, and have been partaker of all those spiritual helps which might aid me to perform that vow I there made to thee; and when by my own wilfulness or negligence, I have failed to do it, yet thou in thy manifold mercies hast not forsaken me, but hast graciously invited me to repentance, afforded me all means both outward and inward for it, and with much patience hast attended, and not cut me off in the acts of those many damning sins I have committed, as I have most justly deserved. It is, O Lord, thy restraining grace alone, by which I have been kept back from any the greatest sins, and it is thy inciting and assisting grace alone, by which I have been enabled to do any the least good; therefore, not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name be the praises. For these and all other thy spiritual blessings, my soul doth magnifie the Lord, and all that is within me praise his holy name. I likewise praise thee for those many outward blessings I enjoy, as health, friends, food and raiment, the comforts as well as the necessaries of this life, for those continual protections of thy hand, by which I and mine are kept from dangers, and those gracious deliverances thou hast often afforded out of such as have befallen me, and for that mercy of thine, whereby thou hast sweetned and allayed those troubles thou hast not seen fit wholly to remove; for thy particular preservation of me this night, and all other thy goodness towards me. Lord, grant that I may render thee not only the fruit of my lips, but the obedience of my life, that so these blessings here may be an earnest of those richer blessings thou hast prepared for those that love thee, and that for his sake, whom thou hast made the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey him, even Jesus Christ.

A Confession.

O Righteous Lord, who hatest iniquity, I thy sinful creature cast my self at thy feet, acknowledging that I most justly deserve to be utterly abhorred and forsaken by thee: For I have drunk iniquity like water, gone on in a continual course of sin and rebellion against thee, daily committing those things thou forbiddest, and leaving undone those things thou commandest: Mine heart, which should be an habitation for thy Spirit, is become a cage of unclean birds, of foul and disordered affections; and out of this abundance of the heart my mouth speaketh, my hands act, so that in thought, word, and deed I continually transgress against thee: [*Here mention the greatest of thy sins.*] Nay, O Lord, I have despised that goodness of thine, which should lead me to repentance, hardening my heart against all those means thou hast used for my amendment. And now, Lord, what can I expect from thee, but judgment and fiery indignation, that is indeed the due reward of my sins? But, O Lord, there is mercy with thee that thou mayest be feared, O fit me for that mercy, by giving me a deep and hearty repentance, and then according to thy goodness let thine anger and thy wrath be turned away from me: Look upon me in thy Son, my blessed Saviour, and for the merit of his sufferings pardon all my sins: And, Lord, I beseech thee, by the power of thy grace so to renew and purifie my heart, that I may become a new creature, utterly forsaking every evil way, and living in constant, sincere, universal obedience to thee all the rest of my days; that behaving my self as a good and faithful servant, I may by thy mercy at the last be received into the joy of my Lord. Grant this for Jesus Christ his sake.

A Prayer for Grace.

O Most gracious God, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh, I wretched creature, that am not able of my self so much as to think a good thought, beseech thee to work in me both to will and do according to thy good pleasure. Enlighten my mind, that I may know thee, and let me not be barren or unfruitful in that knowledge: Lord, work in my heart a true faith, a purifying hope, and an unfeign'd love towards thee: Give me a full trust on thee, zeal for thee, reverence of all things that relate to thee: Make me fearful to offend thee, thankful for thy mercies, humble under thy corrections, devout in thy service, sorrowful for my sins: And grant that in all things I may behave my self so, as befits a creature to his Creator, a servant to his Lord. Enable me likewise to perform that duty I owe to my self, give me that meekness, humility, and contentedness, whereby I may always possess my soul in patience and thankfulness; make me diligent in all my duties, watchful against all temptations, perfectly pure and temperate, and so moderate in my most lawful enjoyments, that they may never become a snare to me: Make me also, O Lord, to be so affected towards my neighbour, that I never transgress that royal law of thine, of loving him as my self; grant me exactly to perform all parts of justice, yielding to all whatsoever by any kind of right becomes their due; and give me such bowels of mercy and compassion, that I may never fail to do all acts of charity to all men, whether friends or enemies, according to thy command and example. Finally, I beseech thee, O Lord, to sanctifie me throughout, that my whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory for ever. *Amen.*

Intercession.

O Blessed Lord, whose mercy is over all thy works, I beseech thee to have mercy upon all men, and grant that the precious ransom which was paid by thy Son for all, may be effectual to the saving of all. Give thy enlightning grace to those that are in darkness, and thy converting grace to those that are in sin: Look with thy tenderest compassions upon the universal Church. O be favourable and gracious unto *Sion*, build thou the walls of *Jerusalem*: Unite all those that profess thy name to thee by purity and holiness, and to each other by brotherly love. Have mercy on this desolate Church and sinful Nation; thou hast moved the land and divided it, heal the sores thereof, for it shaketh; make us so truly to repent of those sins, which have provoked thy judgments, that thou also mayest turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind thee. Bless those whom thou hast appointed our governours, whether in Church or State: So rule their hearts, and strengthen their hands, that they may neither want will nor power to punish wickedness and vice, and to maintain God's true Religion and Virtue. Have pity, O Lord, on all that are in affliction; be a Father to the fatherless, and plead the cause of the widow, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, heal the sick, relieve the needy, defend the oppressed, and administer to every one according to their several necessities: Let thy blessings rest upon all that are near and dear to me, and grant them whatsoever thou seest necessary either to their bodies or their souls. [*Here name thy nearest relations.*] Reward all those that have done me good, and pardon all those that have done, or wisht me evil, and work in them and me all that good which may make us acceptable in thy sight, through Jesus Christ.

For Preservation.

O Merciful God, by whose bounty alone it is that I have this day added to my life, I beseech thee so to guide me in it by thy grace, that I may do nothing which may dishonour thee, or wound my own soul; but that I may diligently apply my self to do all such good works, as thou hast prepared for me to walk in: And, Lord, I beseech thee, give thy Angels charge over me, to keep me in all my ways, that no evil happen unto me, nor any plague come nigh my dwelling, but that I and mine may be safe under thy gracious protection, through Jesus Christ.

O Lord, pardon the wandrings and coldness of these petitions, and deal with me not according either to my prayers, or deserts, but according to my needs and thine own rich mercies in Jesus Christ, in whose blessed name and words I conclude these my imperfect prayers, saying, *Our Father*, &c.

DIRECTIONS for NIGHT.

AT Night, when it draws towards the time of rest, bethink thy self how thou hast passed the day; examine thine own heart, what sin either of thought, word, or deed thou hast committed, what opportunity of doing good thou hast omitted, and whatsoever thou findest to accuse thy self of, confess humbly and penitently to God; renew thy purposes and resolutions of amendment, and beg his pardon in Christ; and this not slightly, and only as of course, but with all devout earnestness, and heartiness, as thou wouldest do, if thou wert sure thy death were as near approaching, as thy sleep, which, for ought thou knowest, may be so indeed; and therefore thou shouldest no more venture to sleep unreconciled to God, than thou wouldest dare to die so. In the next place, consider, what special and extraordinary mercies thou hast that day received, as if thou hast had any great deliverance, either in thy inward man, from some dangerous temptations, or in thy outward, from any great and apparent danger, and offer to God thy hearty and devout praise for the same; or if nothing extraordinary have so happened, and thou hast been kept even from the approach of danger, thou hast not the less, but the greater cause to magnifie God, who hath by his protection so guarded thee, that not so much as the fear of evil hath assaulted thee. And therefore omit not to pay him the tribute of humble thankfulness, as well for his usual and daily preservations, as his more extraordinary deliverances. And above all, endeavour still, by the consideration of his mercies, to have thy heart the more closely knit to him, remembring that every favour received from him is a new engagement upon thee to love and obey him.

Prayers for Night.

O Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God, have mercy upon me a miserable sinner.

Lord, I know not what to pray for as I ought, O let thy Spirit help my infirmities, and enable me to offer up a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable unto thee by Jesus Christ.

A Confession.

O Most Holy Lord God, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, how shall I abominable wretch dare to appear before thee, who am nothing but pollution? I am defiled in my very nature, having a backwardness to all good, and a readiness to all evil; but I have defiled my self yet much worse by my own actual sins and wicked customs. I have transgressed my duty to thee, my neighbour, and my self, and that both in thought, in word, and in deed, by doing those things which thou hast expresly forbidden, and by neglecting to do those things thou hast commanded me. And this not only through ignorance and frailty, but knowingly and wilfully, against the motions of thy Spirit, and the checks of my own conscience to the contrary. And to make all these out of measure sinful, I have gone on in a daily course of repeating these provocations against thee, notwithstanding all thy calls to, and my own purposes and vows of amendment; yea, this very day I have not ceased to add new sins to all my former guilts. [*Here name the particulars.*] And now, O Lord, what shall I say, or how shall I open my mouth, seeing I have done these things? I know that the wages of these sins is death, but O thou, who willest not the death of a sinner, have mercy upon me; work in me, I beseech thee, a sincere contrition, and a perfect hatred of my sins; and let me not daily confess, and yet as daily renew them; but grant, O Lord, that from this instant I may give a bill of divorce to all my most beloved lusts, and then be thou pleased to marry me to thy self in truth, in righteousness and holiness. And for all my past sins, O Lord, receive a reconciliation; accept of that ransom thy blessed Son hath paid for me, and for his sake, whom thou hast set forth as a propitiation, pardon all my offences, and receive me to thy favour. And when thou hast thus spoken peace to my soul, Lord, keep me, that I turn not any more to folly, but so establish me with thy grace, that no temptation of the world, the Devil, or my own flesh, may ever draw me to offend thee; that being made free from sin, and becoming a servant unto God, I may have my fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Thanksgiving.

O Thou Father of mercies, who art kind even to the unthankful, I acknowledge my self to have abundantly experimented that gracious property of thine: For notwithstanding my daily provocations against thee, thou still heapest mercy and loving kindness upon me. All my contempts and despisings of thy spiritual favours have not yet made thee withdraw them, but in the riches of thy goodness and long-suffering thou still continuest to me the offers of grace and life in thy Son. And all my abuses of thy temporal blessings thou hast not punished with an utter deprivation of them, but art still pleased to afford me a liberal portion of them. The sins of this day thou hast not repayed, as justly thou mightest, by sweeping me away with a swift destruction; but hast spared and preserved me according to the greatness of thy mercy. [*Here mention the particular mercies of that day.*] What shall I render unto the Lord for all these benefits he hath done unto me? Lord, let this goodness of thine lead me to repentance, and grant that I may not only offer thee thanks and praise, but may also order my conversation aright, that so I may at the last see the salvation of God, through Jesus Christ.

Here use the prayer for grace, and that of intercession appointed for the morning.

For Preservation.

O Blessed Lord, the Keeper of *Israel*, that neither slumberest nor sleepest, be pleased in thy mercy to watch over me this Night; keep me by thy grace from all works of darkness, and defend me by thy power from all dangers: Grant me moderate and refreshing sleep, such as may fit me for the duties of the day following. And, Lord, make me ever mindful of that time, when I shall lie down in the dust; and, because I know neither the day nor the hour of my Master's coming, grant me grace that I may be always ready, that I may never live in such a state, as I shall fear to die in; but that whether I live, I may live unto the Lord, or whether I die, I may die unto the Lord; so that living and dying I may be thine, through Jesus Christ.

Use the same concluding prayer as in the morning.

As thou art putting off thy clothes, think with thy self, that the time approaches that thou must put off thy body also, and then thy soul must appear naked before God's Judgment-seat; *and therefore thou hast need be careful to make it so clean and pure by repentance and holiness, that he who will not look on iniquity, may graciously behold and accept it.*

Let thy bed put thee in mind of thy grave, and when thou liest down, say,

O Blessed Saviour, who by thy precious death and burial didst take away the sting of death, and the power of the grave, grant me the joyful fruits of that thy victory, and be thou to me in life and death advantage.

I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest; for it is thou, Lord, only, that makest me dwell in safety.

Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed it, O Lord, thou God of truth.

In the Ancient Church *there were, besides* Morning *and* Night, *four other times every day, which were called* Hours of prayer; *and the zeal of those first Christians was such, as made them constantly observed. It would be thought too great a strictness now, in this lukewarm age, to enjoin the like frequency: Yet I cannot but mention the example, and say, that for those who are not by very necessary business prevented, it will be but reasonable to imitate it, and make up in publick and private those* four times *of* prayer, *besides the* offices *already set down for* Morning *and* Night. *And, that none may be to seek, how to exercise their devotions at these times, I have added divers* Collects *for several graces, whereof every man may use at each such time of prayer, so many as his zeal and leisure shall point out to him; adding, if he please, one of the confessions appointed for* Morning *and* Night, *and never omitting the* Lord's Prayer.

But

But if any man's ſtate of life be really ſo buſy, as will not allow him time for ſo long and ſolemn devotions: yet certainly there is no man ſo overlaid with buſineſs, but that he may find leiſure oftentimes in a day to ſay the Lord's Prayer *alone: And therefore let him uſe that, if he cannot more. But becauſe it is the character of a Chriſtian,* Phil. 3. 20. That he hath his converſation in heaven, *it is very fit, that beſides theſe ſet times of prayer, he ſhould divers times in a day, by ſhort and ſudden* Ejaculations, *dart up his ſoul thither. And for this ſort of devotion no man can want leiſure, for it may be performed in the midſt of buſineſs, the artificer at his work, the husbandman at his plough, may practiſe it. Now, as he cannot want time, ſo that he may not want matter for it, I have thought it not unuſeful out of that rich ſtore houſe, the* Book of Pſalms, *to furniſh him with ſome texts, which may very fitly be uſed for this purpoſe; which being learned by heart, will always be ready at hand to employ his Devotion; and the matter of them being various, ſome for pardon of ſin, ſome for grace, ſome for the light of God's countenance, ſome for the Church, ſome for thankſgiving, &c. every man may fit himſelf according to the preſent need and temper of his ſoul. I have given theſe, not as a full collection, but only a taſte, by which the reader's appetite may be raiſed to ſearch after more in that Book, and other parts of Holy Scripture.*

COLLECTS for ſeveral GRACES.

For Faith.

O Bleſſed Lord, whom without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe, let thy Spirit, I beſeech thee, work in me ſuch a Faith, as may be acceptable in thy ſight, even ſuch as worketh by love. O let me not reſt in a dead ineffectual Faith, but grant that it may be ſuch, as may ſhew it ſelf by my works, that it may be that victorious Faith, which may enable me to overcome the world, and conform me to the image of that Chriſt, on whom I believe; that ſo at the laſt I may receive the end of my Faith, even the ſalvation of my ſoul, by the ſame Jeſus Chriſt.

For Hope.

O Lord, who art the Hope of all the ends of the earth, let me never be deſtitute of a well-grounded Hope, nor yet poſſeſſed with a vain preſumption; ſuffer me not to think thou wilt either be reconciled to my ſins, or reject my repentance; but give me, I beſeech thee, ſuch a Hope as may be anſwerable to the only ground of Hope, thy promiſes, and ſuch as may both encourage and enable me to purifie my ſelf from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit, that ſo it may indeed become to me an anchor of the ſoul both ſure and ſtedfaſt, entring even within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for me entred, even Jeſus Chriſt, my High Prieſt, and bleſſed Redeemer.

For the Love of God.

O Holy and gracious Lord, who art infinitely excellent in thy ſelf, and infinitely bountiful and compaſſionate towards me, I beſeech thee ſuffer not my heart to be ſo hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, as to reſiſt ſuch charms of Love, but let them make deep and laſting impreſſions on my ſoul. Lord, thou art pleaſed to require my heart, and thou only haſt right to it: O let me not be ſo ſacrilegiouſly unjuſt, as to alienate any part of it, but enable me to render it up whole and entire to thee. But, O my God, thou ſeeſt it is already uſurped, the world with its vanities hath ſeized it, and, like a ſtrong man armed, keeps poſſeſſion. O thou, who art ſtronger, come upon him, and take this unworthy heart of mine as thine own ſpoil; refine it with that purifying fire of thy Love, that it may be a fit habitation for thy Spirit. Lord, if thou ſee it fit, be pleaſed to let me taſte of thoſe joys, thoſe raviſhments of thy Love, wherewith thy Saints have been ſo tranſported. But if in this I know not what I aſk, if I may not chooſe my place in thy kingdom, yet, O Lord, deny me not to drink of thy cup: Let me have ſuch a ſincerity and degree of Love, as may make me endure any thing for thy ſake, ſuch a perfect Love, as may caſt out all fear and ſloth too, that nothing may ſeem to me too grievous to ſuffer, or too difficult to do, in obedience to thee; that ſo expreſſing my Love by keeping thy commandments, I may, by thy mercy, at laſt obtain that crown of life, which thou haſt promiſed to thoſe that love thee, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

For Sincerity.

O Holy Lord, who requireſt truth in the inward parts, I humbly beſeech thee, to purge me from all hypocriſie and unſincerity. The heart, O Lord, is deceitful above all things, and my heart is deceitful above all hearts. O thou, who ſearcheſt the heart and reins, try me, and ſeek the ground of my heart, and ſuffer not any accurſed thing to lurk within me, but purifie me even with fire, ſo thou conſume my droſs. O Lord, I cannot deceive thee, but I may moſt eaſily deceive my ſelf. I beſeech thee, let me not reſt in any ſuch deceit; but bring me to a ſight and hatred of my moſt hidden corruptions, that I may not cheriſh any darling luſt, but make an utter deſtruction of every *Amalekite.* O ſuffer me not to ſpeak peace to my ſelf, when there is no peace; but grant I may judge of my ſelf as thou judgeſt of me, that I may never be at peace with my ſelf, till I am at perfect peace with thee, and, by purity of heart, be qualified to ſee thee in thy kingdom, through Jeſus Chriſt.

For Devotion in Prayer.

O Gracious Lord God, who not only permitteſt, but inviteſt us miſerable and needy creatures to preſent our petitions to thee; grant, I beſeech thee, that the frequency of my Prayer may be ſomewhat proportionable to thoſe continual needs I have of thy mercy. Lord, I confeſs, it is the greateſt honour and greateſt advantage, thus to be allowed acceſs to thee; yet ſo ſottiſh and ſtupid is my profane heart, that it ſhuns or fruſtrates the opportunities of it. My ſoul, O Lord, is poſſeſt with a ſpirit of infirmity; it is bow'd together, and can in no wiſe lift up it ſelf to thee. O be thou pleaſed to cure this ſad, this miſerable diſeaſe, to inſpirit and enliven this earthly, droſſy heart, that it may freely mount towards thee; that I may ſet a true value on this moſt valuable privilege, and take delight in approaching to thee; and that my approaches may be with a reverence ſome way anſwerable to that awful Majeſty I come before; with an importunity and earneſtneſs anſwerable to thoſe preſſing wants I have to be ſupplied; and with ſuch a fixedneſs and attention of mind, as no wandring thoughts may interrupt: That I may no more incur the guilt of drawing near to thee with my lips, when my heart is far from thee, or have my Prayers turned into ſin; but may ſo aſk, that I may receive; ſeek, that I may find; knock, that it may be opened unto me; that from praying to thee here, I may be tranſlated to the praiſing thee eternally in thy glory, through the merits and interceſſion of Jeſus Chriſt.

For Humility.

O Thou High and Lofty One, that inhabiteſt eternity, yet art pleaſed to dwell with the humble ſpirit, pour into my heart, I beſeech thee, that excellent grace of Humility, which may utterly work out all thoſe vain conceits I have of my ſelf. Lord, convince me powerfully of my own wretchedneſs, make me to ſee that I am miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and not only duſt, but ſin; that ſo, in all thy diſpenſations towards me, I may lay my hand upon my mouth, and heartily acknowledge, that I am leſs than the leaſt of thy mercies, and greater than the greateſt of thy judgments. And, O Lord, grant me not only to walk humbly with my God, but even with men alſo, that I may not only ſubmit my ſelf to thy rebukes, but even to thoſe of my fellow Chriſtians, and with meekneſs receive and obey their admonitions. And make me ſo to behave my ſelf towards all, that I never do any thing through ſtrife and vain-glory; and to that end grant, that in lowlineſs of mind I may eſteem every other man better than my ſelf, and be willing that others ſhould eſteem them ſo alſo: That I neither nouriſh any high opinion of my ſelf, nor covet one among others; but, that deſpiſing the vain praiſe of men, I may ſeek that praiſe which cometh from thee only: That ſo, inſtead of thoſe mean ſervile arts I have uſed to recommend me to the eſteem of men, I may now employ all my induſtry and care to approve my ſelf to thee, who reſiſteſt the proud, and giveſt grace to the humble. Grant this, O Lord, for his ſake, who humbled himſelf unto the death of the Croſs, Jeſus Chriſt.

For the Fear of God.

O Glorious Majeſty, who only art high and to be feared, poſſeſs my ſoul with an holy awe and reverence of thee, that I may give thee the honour due unto thy name, and may bear ſuch a reſpect to all things which relate to thee, that I may never

profane

profane any holy thing, or sacrilegiously invade what thou hast set apart to thy self. And, O Lord, since thou art a God, that wilt not clear the guilty, let the dread of thy justice make me tremble to provoke thee in any thing. O let me not so misplace my Fear, as to be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as grass, and forget the Lord my Maker; but replenish my soul with that Fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, which may be as a bridle to all my brutish appetites, and keep me in a constant conformity to thy holy will. Hear me, O Lord, I beseech thee, and put this Fear in my heart, that I may not depart from thee; but may, with Fear and Trembling, work out my own salvation, through Jesus Christ.

For Trust on God.

O Almighty Lord, who never failest them that trust on thee, give me grace, I beseech thee, in all my difficulties and distresses, to have recourse to thee, to rest and depend on thee: Thou shalt keep him, O Lord, in perfect peace, whose mind is staid on thee. O let me always rest on this firm pillar, and never exchange it for the broken reeds of worldly succours: Suffer not my heart to be over-charged with the cares of this life, taking thought what I shall eat or drink, or wherewithal I shall be clothed; but grant, that, having by honest labour and industry done my part, I may chearfully commit my self to thy providence, casting all my care upon thee, and being careful for nothing, but to be of the number of those whom thou ownest and carest for, even such as keep thy testimonies, and think upon thy commandments to do them; that seeking first thy kingdom, and the righteousness thereof, all these outward things may be added unto me, in such a measure, as thy wisdom knows best for me. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ his sake.

For Thankfulness.

O Most gracious and bountiful Lord, who fillest all things living with good, and expectest no other return, but praise and Thanksgiving; let me, O Lord, never defraud thee of that so easie tribute; but let my heart be ever filled with the sense, and my mouth with the acknowledgement of thy mercies. It is a joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful; O suffer me not, I beseech thee, to lose my part in that divine pleasure; but grant, that as I daily receive blessings from thee, so I may daily, from an affectionate and devout heart, offer up Thanks to thee; and grant that not only my lips, but my life, may shew forth thy praise, by consecrating my self to thy service, and walking in holiness and righteousness before thee all the days of my life, through Jesus Christ my Lord and blessed Saviour.

For Contrition.

O Holy Lord, who art a merciful embracer of true penitents, but yet a consuming fire towards obstinate sinners, how shall I approach thee, who have so many provoking sins to inflame thy wrath, and so little sincere repentance to incline thy mercy! O be thou pleased to soften and melt this hard obdurate heart of mine, that I may heartily bewail the iniquities of my life; strike this rock, O Lord, that the waters may flow out, even floods of tears to wash my polluted conscience. My drousie soul hath too long slept securely in sin; Lord, awake it, though it be with thunder, and let me rather feel thy terrors, than not feel my sin. Thou sentest thy blessed Son to heal the broken-hearted; but, Lord, what will that avail me, if my heart be whole? O break it, that it may be capable of this healing virtue; and grant, I beseech thee, that having once tasted the bitterness of sin, I may fly from it, as from the face of a serpent, and bring forth fruits of repentance in amendment of life, to the praise and glory of thy grace, in Jesus Christ our blessed Redeemer.

For Meekness.

O Blessed Jesu, who wast led as a sheep to the slaughter, let, I beseech thee, that admirable example of Meekness quench in me all sparks of anger and revenge, and work in me such a gentleness and calmness of spirit, as no provocations may ever be able to disturb. Lord, grant I may be so far from offering the least injury, that I may never return the greatest, any otherwise than with prayers and kindness; that I,

who

who have so many talents to be forgiven by thee, may never exact pence of my brethren; but that, putting on bowels of mercy, Meekness, long-suffering, thy peace may rule in my heart, and make it an acceptable habitation to thee, who art the Prince of Peace, to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit be all honour and glory for ever.

For Chastity.

O Holy and immaculate Jesus, whose first descent was into the Virgin's womb, and who dost still love to inhabit only in pure and virgin hearts, I beseech thee, send thy Spirit of purity to cleanse me from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit: My body, O Lord, is the temple of the Holy Ghost; O let me never pollute that temple with any uncleanness. And because out of the heart proceed the things that defile the man, Lord, grant me to keep my heart with all diligence, that no impure or foul thoughts be harboured there; but enable me, I beseech thee, to keep both body and soul pure and undefiled; that so I may glorifie thee here, both in body and spirit, and be glorified in both with thee hereafter.

For Temperance.

O Gracious Lord, who hast in thy bounty to mankind offered to us the use of thy good creatures for our corporal refreshment, grant that I may always use this liberty with thankfulness and moderation. O let me never be so enslaved to that brutish pleasure of taste, that my table become a snare to me; but give me, I beseech thee, a perfect abhorrence of all degrees of excess, and let me eat and drink only for those ends, and according to those measures, which thou hast assigned me, for health, and not for luxury. And, Lord, grant that my pursuits may be not after the meat that perisheth, but after that which endureth to everlasting life; that hungring and thirsting after righteousness, I may be filled with thy grace here, and thy glory hereafter, through Jesus Christ.

For Contentedness.

O Merciful God, thy wisdom is infinite to choose, and thy love forward to dispense good things to us; O let me always fully and entirely resign my self to thy dispofals, have no desires of my own, but a perfect satisfaction in thy choices for me; that so, in whatsoever estate I am, I may be therein content. Lord, grant I may never look with murmuring on my own condition, nor with envy on other mens. And to that end, I beseech thee, purge my heart of all covetous affections. O let me never yield up any corner of my soul to Mammon, but give me such a contempt of these fading riches, that whether they increase, or decrease, I may never set my heart upon them, but that all my care may be to be rich towards God, to lay up my treasure in heaven; that I may so set my affections on things above, that when Christ, who is my life, shall appear, I may also appear with him in glory. Grant this, O Lord, for the merits of the same Jesus Christ.

For Diligence.

O Lord, who hast in thy wisdom ordain'd, that man should be born to labour, suffer me not to resist that design of thine, by giving my self up to sloth and idleness; but grant I may so employ my time, and all other talents thou hast entrusted me with, that I may not fall under the sentence of the slothful and wicked servant. Lord, if it be thy will, make me some way useful to others, that I may not live an unprofitable part of mankind; but, however, O Lord, let me not be useless to my self, but grant I may give all Diligence to make my calling and election sure. My soul is beset with many and vigilant adversaries; O let me not fold my hands to sleep in the midst of so great dangers, but watch and pray, that I enter not into temptation, enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, till at the last from this state of warfare, thou translate me to the state of triumph and bliss in thy kingdom, through Jesus Christ.

For

For Justice.

O Thou King of righteousness, who hast commanded us to keep judgment, and do Justice, be pleased by thy Grace to cleanse my heart and hands from all fraud and injustice, and give me a perfect integrity and uprightness in all my dealings. O make me ever abhor to use my power to oppress, or my skill to deceive my brother; and grant I may most strictly observe that sacred rule, of doing as I would be done to; that I may not dishonour my Christian profession by an unjust and fraudulent life, but in simplicity, and godly sincerity, have my conversation in the world; never seeking to heap up treasures in this life, but preferring a little with righteousness, before great revenues without right. Lord, make me exactly careful to render to every man what, by any sort of obligation, becomes his due, that I may never break the bond of any of those relations that thou hast placed me in, but may so behave my self towards all, that none may have any evil thing to say of me; that so, if it be possible, I may have peace with all men; or, however, I may by keeping innocency, and taking heed to the thing that is right, have peace at the last, even peace with thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For Charity.

O Merciful Lord, who hast made of one blood, and redeemed by one ransom, all nations of men, let me never harden my bowels against any that partake of the same nature and redemption with me, but grant me an universal Charity towards all men. Give me, O thou father of compassions, such a tenderness and meltingness of heart, that I may be deeply affected with all the miseries and calamities, outward or inward, of my Brethren, and diligently employ all my abilities for their succour and relief. O let not an unchristian self-love possess my heart, but drive out that accursed spirit, and let thy spirit of love enter and dwell there, and make me seek not to please my self, but my neighbour, for his good to edification, even as Christ pleased not himself. Lord, make me a faithful steward of all those talents thou hast committed to me for the benefit of others, that so, when thou shalt call me to give an account of my stewardship, I may do it with joy, and not with grief. Grant this, merciful Lord, I beseech thee, for Jesus Christ his sake.

For Perseverance.

O Eternal and unchangeable Lord God, who art the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever; be thou pleased to communicate some small ray of that excellence, some degree of that stability to me thy wretched creature, who am light and unconstant, turned about with every blast; my understanding is very deceivable, O establish it in thy truth, keep it from the snares of seducing spirits, that I may not be led away with the error of the wicked, and fall from my own stedfastness: My will also, O Lord, is irresolute and wavering, and doth not cleave stedfastly unto God; my goodness is but as the morning cloud, and as the early due it passeth away. O strengthen and confirm me; and whatever good work thou hast wrought in me, be pleased to accomplish and perform it until the day of Christ. Lord, thou seest my weakness, and thou knowest the number and strength of those temptations I have to struggle with. O leave me not to my self, but cover thou my head in the day of battle, and in all spiritual combats make me more than conqueror, through him that loved me. O let no terrors, or flatteries, either of the world, or my own flesh, ever draw me from my obedience to thee; but grant that I may continue stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and by patient continuing in well-doing, seek, and at last obtain, glory, and honour, and immortality, and eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Brief

A Brief PARAPHRASE of the LORD's PRAYER,

To be uſed as a PRAYER.

[*Our Father which art in Heaven.*]

O LORD, who dwelleſt in the higheſt Heavens, thou art the Author of our being, thou haſt alſo begotten us again unto a lively hope, and carrieſt towards us the tenderneſs and bowels of a compaſſionate Father; O make us to render to thee the love and obedience of children: And that we may reſemble thee *our Father in Heaven* (that place of true delight and purity) give us a holy diſdain of all the deceitful pleaſures and foul pollutions of this world, and ſo raiſe up our minds, that we may always have our converſation in heaven, from whence we look for our Saviour the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

[1. *Hallowed be thy Name.*]

STrike ſuch an awe in our hearts, that we may humbly reverence thee in *thy Name*, which is great, wonderful, and holy; and carry ſuch a ſacred reſpect to all things that relate to thee and thy worſhip, as may expreſs our reverence to thy great Majeſty. Let all the people praiſe thee, O God! let all the people praiſe thee.

[2. *Thy Kingdom come.*]

EStabliſh thy throne, and rule for ever in our ſouls, and by the power of thy grace ſubdue all thoſe rebellious corruptions that exalt themſelves againſt thee: They are thoſe enemies of thine, which would not thou ſhouldſt reign over them. O let them be brought forth and ſlain before thee; and make us ſuch faithful ſubjects of this thy *Kingdom of grace*, that we may be capable of the *Kingdom of glory*, and then, Lord Jeſus, come quickly.

[3. *Thy Will be done in Earth.*]

ENable us by thy grace chearfully to ſuffer *thy Will* in all our afflictions, and readily perform it in all thy commands: Give us of that heavenly zeal to thy ſervice, wherewith the bleſſed Angels of thy preſence are inſpired, that we may obey thee with the like fervour and alacrity; and that, following them in their obedience, we may be joyned with them to ſing eternal praiſes in thy kingdom, to God and to the Lamb for ever.

[4. *Give us this Day our*, &c.]

GIve us that continual ſupply of thy grace, which may ſuſtain and nouriſh our ſouls unto eternal life. And be thou pleaſed alſo to provide for our bodies all thoſe things which thou ſeeſt fit for their ſupport, through this our earthly pilgrimage; and make us chearfully to reſt on thee for them, firſt ſeeking thy Kingdom, and the righteouſneſs thereof, and then not doubting but all theſe things ſhall be added unto us.

[5. *Forgive us our Treſpaſſes*, &c.]

HEal our ſouls, O Lord, for we have ſinned againſt thee; let thy tender mercies abound towards us, in the *Forgiveneſs of all our offences*: And grant, O Lord, that we may never forfeit this pardon of thine, by denying ours to our brethren; but give us thoſe bowels of compaſſion to others, which we ſtand in ſo much greater need of from thee, that we may *forgive* as fully and finally upon Chriſt's command, as we deſire to be *forgiven* for his merits and interceſſion.

[6. *Lead us not into Temptation*, &c.]

O Lord, we have no strength against those multitudes of *Temptations* that daily assault us, only our eyes are upon thee: O be thou pleased either to restrain them, or assist us; and in thy faithfulness suffer us not to be tempted above that we are able; but in all our Temptations make us a way to escape, that we be not overcome by them, but may, when thou shalt call us to it, resist even unto blood, striving against sin, that being faithful unto death, thou mayest give us the crown of life.

[7. *For thine is the Kingdom*, &c.]

HEar us, and graciously answer our petitions; for thou art the great King over all the earth, whose power is infinite, and art able to do for us above all that we can ask or think, and to whom belongeth the glory of all that good thou workest in us or for us. Therefore blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, to our God for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Pious EJACULATIONS taken out of the Book of PSALMS.

For Pardon of Sin.

HAVE mercy on me, O God, after thy great goodness; according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences.
Wash me throughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my Sin.
Turn thy face from my Sins, and put out all my misdeeds.
My misdeeds prevail against me: O be thou merciful unto my Sins.
Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.
For thy name's sake, O Lord, be merciful unto my Sin, for it is great.
Turn thee, O Lord, and deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercies sake.

For Grace.

TEach me to do the thing that pleaseth thee; for thou art my God.
Teach me thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in thy truth: O knit my heart to thee, that I may fear thy name.
Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
O let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.
Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.
Turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.
I am a stranger upon earth, O hide not thy Commandments from me.
Lord, teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom.

For the Light of God's Countenance.

LORD, why abhorrest thou my soul, and hidest thy face from me? O hide not thou thy face from me, nor cast thy servant away in displeasure!
Thy loving kindness is better than life it self.
Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon me.
Comfort the soul of thy servant; for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

Thanksgiving.

I Will always give Thanks unto the Lord, his praise shall ever be in my mouth.
Thou art my God, and I will thank thee: thou art my God, and I will praise thee.
I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will praise my God whilst I have my being.
Praised be God, which hath not cast out my Prayer, nor turned his mercy from me.

Blessed

Blessed be the Lord God, even the God of *Israel*, which only doth wondrous things:

And blessed be the name of his Majesty for ever: And all the earth shall be filled with his Majesty. *Amen, Amen.*

For Deliverance from Trouble.

BE merciful unto me, O Lord, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee, and under the shadow of thy wings shall be my refuge until these calamities be overpast.

Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies, for I flee unto thee to hide me.

O keep my soul, and deliver me: Let me not be confounded, for I have put my trust in thee.

Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord: for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.

Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me: For I am desolate, and in misery.

The sorrows of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my Troubles.

For the Church.

O Be favourable and gracious unto *Sion*; build thou the walls of *Jerusalem*:

O God, wherefore art thou absent from us so long? Why is thy wrath so hot against the sheep of thy pasture?

O think upon thy Congregation, whom thou hast purchased and redeemed of old.

Look upon the tribe of thine inheritance, and mount Sion, where thou hast dwelt.

It is time for thee, Lord, to lay to thy hand; for they have destroyed thy law.

Arise, O God, and maintain thine own cause: Deliver Israel, O God, out of all his Troubles.

Brief Heads of Self-Examination, especially before the Sacrament, collected out of the foregoing Treatise, concerning the Breaches of our Duty.

To GOD.

FAITH.

NOT *believing there is a God.*

Not believing his Word.

Not believing it practically, so as to live according to our belief.

HOPE.

D*Espairing of God's mercy, so as to neglect duty.*

Presuming groundlesly on it, whilst we go on in wilful sin.

LOVE.

NOT *loving God for his own excellencies.*

Not loving him for his goodness to us.

Not labouring to please him.

Not desiring to draw near to him in his ordinances.

Not longing to enjoy him in Heaven.

FEAR.

NOT *fearing God, so as to keep from offending him.*

Fearing man above him, by committing sin, to shun some outward suffering.

TRUST.

NOT *trusting on God in dangers and distresses.*

Using unlawful means to bring us out of them.

Not depending on God for supply of our wants.

Immoderate care for outward things.

Neglecting to labour, and expecting God should support us in our idleness.

Not looking up to God for a blessing on our honest endeavours.

HUMILITY.

NOT *having a high esteem of God.*

Not submitting obediently to act his will.

Not patiently suffering it, but murmuring at his corrections.

Not amending by them.

Not being thankful to him.

Not acknowledging his wisdom in chusing for us, but having eager and impatient desires of our own.

HONOUR.

NOT *honouring God by a reverent usage of the things that relate to him.*

Behaving our selves irreverently in his house.

Robbing God, by taking things that are consecrated to him.
Profaning Holy times, the Lord's Day, and the Feasts and Fasts of the Church.
Neglecting to read the Holy Scriptures; not marking when we do read.
Being careless to get knowledge of our duty, chusing rather to continue ignorant, than put our selves to the pains or charge of learning.
Placing Religion in hearing of Sermons, without practice.
Breaking our vow made at Baptism.
By resorting to witches and conjurers, i. e. *to the Devil.*
By loving the pomps and vanities of the world, and following its sinful customs.
By fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.
Profaning the Lord's Supper.
By coming to it ignorantly, without examination, contrition, and purposes of new life.
By behaving our selves irreverently at it, without devotion and spiritual affection.
By neglecting to keep the promises made at it.
Profaning God's Name, by blasphemous thoughts or discourse.
Giving others occasion to blaspheme him by our vile and wicked lives.
Taking unlawful OATHS.
Perjury.
Swearing in ordinary communication.

WORSHIP.

NOT *worshipping God.*
Omitting prayers, publick or private, and being glad of a pretence to do so.
Asking unlawful things, or to unlawful ends.
Not purifying our hearts from sin before we pray.
Not praying with faith and humility.
Coldness and deadness in Prayer.
Wandring thoughts in it.
Irreverent gestures of body in Prayer.

REPENTANCE.

N*Eglecting the duty of Repentance.*
Not calling our selves to daily account for our sins.
Not assigning any set or solemn times for humiliation, and confession, or too seldom.
Not deeply considering our sins, to beget contrition.
Not acting revenge upon our selves, by fasting, and other acts of mortification.

IDOLATRY.

O*Utward Idolatry, in worshipping of creatures.*
Inward Idolatry, in placing our love, and other affections more on creatures than the Creator.

To our SELVES.

HUMILITY.

B*Eing puffed up with high conceits of our selves.*
In respect of natural parts, as beauty, wit, &c.
Of worldly riches and honours.
Of Grace.
Greedily seeking the praise of men.
Directing Christian actions, as Prayer, Alms, &c. *to that end.*
Committing sins to avoid reproach from wicked men.

MEEKNESS.

D*Isturbing our minds with anger and peevishness.*

CONSIDERATION.

N*OT carefully examining what our estate towards God is.*
Not trying our selves by the true rule, i. e. *our obedience to God's commands.*
Not weighing the lawfulness of our actions before we venture on them.
Not examining our past actions, to repent of the ill, to give God the glory of the good.

CONTENTEDNESS.

U*Ncontentedness in our estates.*
Greedy desires after honour and riches.
Seeking to gain them by sinful means.
Envying the condition of other men.

DILIGENCE, WATCHFULNESS.

B*Eing negligent in observing and resisting temptations.*
Not improving God's gifts, outward or inward, to his honour.
Abusing our natural parts, as wit, memory, &c. *to sin.*
Neglecting or resisting the motions of God's Spirit.

CHASTITY.

U*Ncleanness, adultery, fornication, unnatural lusts,* &c.
Uncleanness of the eye and hand.
Filthy and obscene talking.
Impure fancies and desires.
Heightning of lusts by pampering the body.
Not labouring to subdue it by fasting or other severities.

TEMPERANCE.

E*Ating too much.*
Making pleasure, not health, the end of eating.
Being too curious or costly in meats.
Drunkenness.
Drinking more than is useful to our bodies, though not to drunkenness.
Wasting the time or estate in good fellowship.

Abusing our strength of brain to the making others drunk.
Immoderate sleeping.
Idleness and negligence in our callings.
Using unlawful recreations.
Being too vehement upon lawful ones.
Spending too much time at them.
Being drawn by them to anger or covetousness.
Being proud of apparel.
Striving to go beyond our rank.
Bestowing too much time, care or cost about it.
Abstaining from such excesses, not out of conscience, but covetousness.
Pinching our bodies to fill our purses.

To our NEIGHBOUR.

NEGATIVE JUSTICE.

Being injurious to our Neighbour.
Delighting causlesly to grieve his mind.
Ensnaring his soul in sin, by command, counsel, inticement, or example.
Affrighting him from godliness, by our scoffing at it.
Not seeking to bring those to repentance, whom we have led into sin.

MURDER.

Murder, open or secret.
Drawing men to intemperance, or other vices, which may bring diseases or death.
Stirring men up to quarrelling and fighting.
Maiming or hurting the body of our Neighbour.
Fierceness and rage against him.

ADULTERY.

Coveting our Neighbour's wife.
Actually defiling her.

MALICE.

Spoiling the goods of others upon spite and Malice.

COVETOUSNESS.

Coveting to gain them to our selves.

OPPRESSION.

Oppression by violence and force, or colour of law.

THEFT.

NOT paying what we borrow.
Not paying what we have voluntarily promised.
Keeping back the wages of the servant and hireling.

DECEIT.

Unfaithfulness in trusts, whether to the living or dead.
Using arts of Deceit in buying and selling.
Exacting upon the necessities of our Neighbours.

FALSE-WITNESS.

Blasting the credit of our Neighbour;
By False-witness.
By railing.
By whispering.
Incouraging others in their slanders.
Being forward to believe all ill reports of our Neigbour.
Causless suspicions.
Rash judging of him.
Despising him for his infirmities.
Inviting others to do so, by scoffing and deriding him.
Bearing any malice in the heart.
Secret wishing of death or hurt to our Neighbour.
Rejoicing when any evil befals him.
Neglecting to make what satisfaction we can, for any sort of injury done to our Neighbour.

POSITIVE JUSTICE, HUMILITY, LYING.

Churlish and proud behaviour to others.
Froward and peevish conversation.
Bitter and reproachful language.
Cursing.
Not paying the respect due to the qualities or gifts of others.
Proudly overlooking them.
Seeking to lessen others esteem of them.
Not employing our abilities, whether of mind or estate, in administing to those whose wants require it.

GRATITUDE.

Unthankfulness to our benefactors.
Especially those that admonish us
Not amending upon their reproof.
Being angry at them for it.
Not reverencing our civil parent, the lawful magistrate.
Judging and speaking evil of him.
Grudging his just tributes.
Sowing sedition among people.
Refusing to obey his lawful commands.
Rising up against him, or taking part with them that do.
Despising our spiritual fathers.
Not loving them for their works sake.
Not obeying those commands of God they deliver to us.
Seeking to withhold from them their just maintenance.
Forsaking our lawful pastors to follow factious teachers.

PARENTS.

Stubborn and irreverent behaviour to our natural Parents.
Despising and publishing their infirmities.
Not loving them, nor endeavouring to bring them comfort.
Contemning their counsels.
Murmuring at their government.
Coveting their estates, tho' by their death.

Not

Not ministring to them in their wants of all sorts.
Neglecting to pray for God's blessing on the several sorts of Parents.
Want of natural affection to children.
Mothers refusing to nurse them without a just impediment.
Not bringing them timely to Baptism.
Not early instructing them in the ways of God.
Suffering them, for want of timely correction, to get customs of sin.
Setting them evil examples.
Discouraging them by harsh and cruel usage.
Not providing for their subsistence according to our ability.
Consuming their portions in our own riot.
Reserving all till our death, and letting them want in the mean time.
Not seeking to entail a blessing on them by our Christian lives.
Not heartily praying for them.
Want of affection to our natural brethren.
Envyings and heart-burnings towards them.

DUTY *to* BRETHREN.

NOT *loving our spiritual brethren,* i.e. *our fellow Christians.*
Having no fellow-feeling of their sufferings.
Causlesly forsaking their communion in holy duties.
Not taking deeply to heart the desolations of the Church.

MARRIAGE.

M*Arrying within the degrees forbidden.*
Marrying for undue ends, as covetousness, lust, &c.
Unkind, froward, and unquiet behaviour towards the husband or wife.
Unfaithfulness to the bed.
Not bearing with the infirmities of each other.
Not endeavouring to advance one another's good, spiritual or temporal.
The wife resisting the lawful commands of her husband.
Her striving for rule and dominion over him.
Not praying for each other.

FRIENDSHIP.

U*Nfaithfulness to a Friend.*
Betraying his secrets.
Denying him assistance in his needs.
Neglecting lovingly to admonish him.
Flattering him in his faults.
Forsaking his Friendship upon slight or no cause.
Making leagues in sin, instead of virtuous Friendship.

SERVANTS.

S*Ervants disobeying the lawful commands of their masters.*
Purloyning their goods.
Carelesly wasting them.
Murmuring at their rebukes.
Idleness.
Eye-service.

MASTERS.

M*Asters using servants tyrannically and cruelly.*
Being too remiss, and suffering them to neglect their duty.
Having no care of their souls.
Not providing them means of instruction in religion.
Not admonishing them when they commit sins.
Not allowing them time and opportunity for Prayer, and the worship of God.

CHARITY.

W*Ant of bowels and Charity to our neighbours.*
Not heartily desiring their good, spiritual or temporal.
Not loving and forgiving enemies.
Taking actual revenges upon them.
Falseness, professing kindness, and acting none.
Not labouring to do all the good we can [to] the soul of our neighbour.
Not assisting him to our power in his bodily distresses.
Not defending his good name, when we know him slandered.
Denying him any neighbourly office to preserve or advance his estate.
Not defending him from oppression when we have power.
Not relieving him in his poverty.
Not giving liberally and chearfully.

GOING *to* LAW.

N*OT loving PEACE.*
Going to Law upon slight occasions.
Bearing inward enmity to those we sue.
Not labouring to make peace among others.

THE *use of this* catalogue of sins *is this: Upon days of humiliation, especially before the* Sacrament, *read them consideringly over, and at every particular ask thine own heart,* Am I guilty of this? *And whatsoever by such examination thou findest thy self faulty in, confess particularly and humbly to God, with all the heightning circumstances which may any way increase their guilts, and make serious resolutions against every such sin for the future; after which thou mayst use this form following:*

O LORD, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee; for my iniquities are increased over my head, and my trespass is grown up even unto heaven. I have wrought all these great provocations, and that in the most provoking manner;

they have not been only single, but repeated acts of sin: For, O Lord, of all this black catalogue which I have now brought forth before thee, how few are there, which I have not often committed? Nay, which are not become even habitual and customary to me? And to this frequency, I have added both a greediness and obstinacy in sinning, turning into my course as the horse rusheth into the battle, doing evil with both hands, earnestly, yea, hating to be reformed, and casting thy words behind me, quenching thy Spirit within me, which testified against me, to turn me from my evil ways, and frustrating all those outward means, whether of judgment, or mercy, which thou hast used to draw me to thy self. Nay, O Lord, even my repentances may be numbred amongst my greatest sins: They have sometimes been feigned and hypocritical, always so slight and ineffectual, that they have brought forth no fruit in amendment of life; but I have still returned with the dog to the vomit, and the sow to the mire again, and have added the breach of resolutions and vows to all my former guilts. Thus, O Lord, I am become out of measure sinful, and since I have thus chosen death, I am most worthy to take part in it, even in the second death, the lake of fire and brimstone. This, this, O Lord, is in justice to be the portion of my cup; to me belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face eternally; but to thee, O Lord God, belongeth mercy and forgiveness, though I have rebelled against thee. O remember not my sins and offences, but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness. Thou sentest thy Son to seek and to save that which was lost: Behold, O Lord, I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; O seek thy servant, and bring me back to the Shepherd and Bishop of my soul. Let thy Spirit work in me a hearty sense and detestation of all my abominations, that true contrition of heart, which thou hast promised not to despise. And then be thou pleased to look on me, to take away all iniquity, and receive me graciously; and for his sake, who hath done nothing amiss, be reconciled to me, who have done nothing well: Wash away the guilt of my sins in his blood, and subdue the power of them by his grace; and grant, O Lord, that I may from this hour bid a final adieu to all ungodliness and worldly lusts, that I may never once more cast a look towards *Sodom*, or long after the flesh-pots of *Egypt*; but consecrate my self entirely to thee, to serve thee in righteousness, and true holiness, reckoning my self to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord and blessed Saviour.

This penitential Psalm *may also fitly be used.*

PSALM LI.

Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness; according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences.

Wash me throughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever before me.

Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and clear when thou art judged.

Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

But lo, thou requirest truth in the inward parts, and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.

Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

Turn thy face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds.

Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

O give me the comfort of thy help again, and stablish me with thy free Spirit.

Then shall I teach thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou that art the God of my health, and my tongue shall sing of thy righteousness.

Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

For thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it thee: but thou delightest not in burnt-offering.

The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise.

O be favourable and gracious unto Sion, *build thou the walls of* Jerusalem.

Then

Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with the burnt-offerings and oblations, then they shall offer young bullocks upon thine altar.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. *Amen.*

PRAYERS *before the receiving of the Blessed* SACRAMENT.

O Most merciful God, who hast in thy great goodness prepared this spiritual Feast for sick and famish'd souls, make my desires and gasping after it answerable to my needs of it. I have, with the Prodigal, wasted that portion of grace thou bestowedst upon me, and therefore do infinitely want a supply out of this treasury; but, O Lord, how shall such a wretch as I dare to approach this holy Table? I am a dog, how shall I presume to take the childrens bread? Or, how shall this spiritual Manna, this food of Angels, be given to one who hath chosen to feed on husks with swine? Nay, to one who hath already so often trampled these precious things under foot, either carelesly neglecting, or unworthily receiving these holy mysteries? O Lord, my horrible guiltiness makes me tremble to come, and yet makes me not dare to keep away; for where, O Lord, shall my polluted soul be washed, if not in this fountain, which thou hast opened for sin and for uncleanness? Hither therefore I come, and thou hast promised, that him that cometh to thee thou wilt in no wise cast out: This is, O Lord, the Blood of the New Testament; grant me so to receive it, that it may be to me for remission of sins; and though I have so often and so wretchedly broken my part of that covenant, whereof this Sacrament is a seal, yet be thou graciously pleased to make good thine, to be merciful to my unrighteousness, and to remember my sins and my iniquities no more: And not only so, but to put thy laws into my heart, and to write them in my mind; and by the power of thy grace dispose my soul to such a sincere and constant obedience, that I may never again provoke thee. Lord, grant that in these holy mysteries I may not only commemorate, but effectually receive my blessed Saviour, and all the benefits of his passion; and to that end give me such a preparation of soul, as may qualifie me for it; give me a deep sense of my sins and unworthiness, that being weary and heavy laden, I may be capable of his refreshings; and by being suppled in my own tears, I may be the fitter to be washed in his blood: Raise up my dull and earthly mind from groveling here below, and inspire it with a holy zeal, that I may with spiritual affection approach this spiritual Feast; and let, O Lord, that infinite love of Christ, in dying for so wretched a sinner, inflame my frozen benum'd soul, and kindle in me that sacred fire of love to him, and that so vehement, that no waters may quench, no floods drown it, such as may burn up all my dross, not leave one unmortified lust in my soul; and such as may also extend it self to all whom thou hast given me command and example to love, even enemies as well as friends. Finally, O Lord, I beseech thee to clothe me in the wedding-garment, and make me, though of my self a most unworthy, yet by thy mercy an acceptable guest at this holy table; that I may not eat nor drink my own condemnation, but may have my pardon sealed, my weakness repaired, my corruptions subdued, and my soul so inseparably united to thee, that no temptations may ever be able to dissolve the union; but that being begun here in grace, it may be consummated in glory. Grant this, O Lord, for thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ.

ANOTHER.

O Blessed Jesus, who once offeredst up thy self for me upon the Cross, and now offerest thy self to me in the Sacrament, let not, I beseech thee, my impenitence and unworthiness frustrate these so inestimable mercies to me; but qualifie me by thy grace to receive the full benefit of them. O Lord, I have abundant need of thee, but am so clogg'd with guilt, so holden with the cords of my sins, that I am not able to move towards thee. O loose me from this band, wherewith Satan and my own lusts have bound me, and draw me, that I may run after thee. Lord, thou seest daily how eagerly I pursue the paths that lead to death; but when thou invitest me to life and glory, I turn my back, and forsake my own mercy. How often hath this Feast been prepared, and I have with frivolous excuses absented my self! Or, if I have come, it has been rather to defie, than to adore thee; I have brought such troops of thy professed enemies, unrepented sins, along with me, as if I came not to commemorate,

morate, but renew thy passion crucifying thee afresh, and putting thee to open shame. And now of what punishment shall I be thought worthy, who have thus trampled under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing? Yet, O merciful Jesu, this blood is my only refuge: O let this make my atonement, or I perish eternally. Wherefore didst thou shed it, but to save sinners? Neither can the merit of it be overwhelmed either by the greatness or number of sins: I am a sinner, a great one, O let me find its saving efficacy. Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful to me, for my soul trusteth in thee, and in the clefts of thy wounds shall be my refuge, until thy Father's indignation be overpast. O thou, who hast as my High Priest sacrificed for me, intercede for me also, and plead thy meritorious sufferings on my behalf, and suffer not, O my Redeemer, the price of thy blood to be utterly lost: And grant, O Lord, that as the sins I have to be forgiven are many, so I may love much. Lord, thou seest what faint, what cold affections I have towards thee; O warm and enliven them: And as in this Sacrament that transcendent love of thine in dying for me is shed forth, so I beseech thee, let it convey such grace into me, as may enable me to make some returns of love: O let this divine fire descend from heaven into my soul, and let my sins be the burnt-offering for it to consume, that there may not any corrupt affection, any cursed thing be sheltered in my heart, that I may never again defile that place, which thou hast chosen for thy temple. Thou diedst, O dear Jesu, to redeem me from all iniquity; O let me not again sell my self to work wickedness; but grant that I may approach thee at this time with most sincere and fixed resolutions of an entire reformation, and let me receive such grace and strength from thee, as may enable me faithfully to perform them. Lord, there are many old habituated diseases my soul groans under. [*Here mention thy most prevailing corruptions.*] And though I lie never so long at the pool of *Bethesda*, come never so often to thy Table, yet unless thou be pleased to put forth thy healing virtue, they will still remain uncured. O thou blessed Physician of souls, heal me, and grant that I may now so touch thee, that every one of these loathsom issues may immediately stanch, that these sicknesses may not be unto death, but unto the glory of thy mercy in pardoning, to the glory of thy grace in purifying so polluted a wretch. O Christ, hear me, and grant I may now approach thee with such humility and contrition, love and devotion, that thou mayst vouchsafe to come unto me, and abide with me, communicating to me thy self, and all the merits of thy Passion. And then, O Lord, let no accusations of Satan or my own conscience amaze or distract me, but having peace with thee, let me also have peace in my self, that this wine may make glad, this bread of life may strengthen my heart, and enable me chearfully to run the way of thy commandments. Grant this, merciful Saviour, for thine own bowels and compassions sake.

EJACULATIONS to be used at the LORD's SUPPER.

LORD, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof.
I have sinned: What shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?
[*Here recollect some of thy greatest sins.*]

If thou, Lord, shouldst be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?

But with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.
Behold, O Lord, thy beloved Son, in whom thou art well pleased.
Hearken to the cry of his Blood, which speaketh better things than that of *Abel.*
By his Agony and bloody Sweat, by his Cross and Passion, good Lord deliver me.
O Lamb of God, which takest away the sins of the world, grant me thy peace.
O Lamb of God, which takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me.

Immediately before Receiving.

THou hast said, that he that eateth thy Flesh, and drinketh thy Blood, hath eternal life.
Behold the servant of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.

At the Receiving of the Bread.

BY thy crucified Body deliver me from this body of death.

At the Receiving of the Cup.

O Let this Blood of thine purge my conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

O touch me, and say, I will, be thou clean.

After Receiving.

WHAT shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits he hath done unto me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Therefore blessing, honour, glory, and power be to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. *Amen.*

I have sworn, and am stedfastly purposed to keep thy righteous judgments.

O hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.

A THANKSGIVING *after the Receiving of the Sacrament.*

O Thou Fountain of all goodness, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh, and to whom all honour and glory should be returned, I desire, with all the most fervent and inflamed affections of a grateful heart, to bless and praise thee for those inestimable mercies thou hast vouchsafed me. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst so regard him, as to send thy beloved Son to suffer such bitter things for him? But, Lord, what am I, the worst of men, that I should have any part in this atonement, who have so often despised him and his Sufferings? O the height and depth of this mercy of thine, that art pleas'd to admit me to the renewing of that covenant with thee, which I have so often and so perversly broken! That I, who am not worthy of that daily bread which sustains the body, should be made partaker of this bread of life which nourisheth the Soul, and that the God of all purity should vouchsafe to unite himself to so polluted a wretch! O my God, suffer me no more, I beseech thee, to turn thy grace into wantonness, to make thy mercy an occasion of security, but let this unspeakable love of thine constrain me to obedience; that since my blessed Lord hath died for me, I may no longer live unto my self, but to him. O Lord, I know there is no concord between Christ and *Belial*; therefore since he hath now been pleased to enter my heart, O let me never permit any lust to chase him thence, but let him that hath so dearly bought me, still keep possession of me, and let nothing ever take me out of his hand. To this end, be thou graciously pleased to watch over me, and defend me from all assaults of my spiritual enemies; but especially deliver me from my self, from the treachery of my own heart, which is too willing to yield it self a prey. And where thou seest I am either by nature or custom most weak, there do thou, I beseech thee, magnifie thy power in my preservation. [*Here mention thy most dangerous Temptations.*] And, Lord, let my Saviour's sufferings for my sins, and the vows I have now made against them, never depart from my mind; but let the remembrance of the one enable me to perform the other, that I may never make truce with those lusts which nailed his hands, pierced his side, and made his Soul heavy to the death: But that, having now anew listed my self under his banner, I may fight manfully, and follow the Captain of my salvation, even through a sea of blood. Lord, lift up my hands that hang down, and my feeble knees, that I faint not in this warfare: O be thou my strength, who am not able of my self to struggle with the slightest temptations. How often have I turned my back in the day of battle? How many of these Sacramental vows have I violated? And, Lord, I have still the same unconstant deceitful heart to betray me to the breach of this. O thou, who art Yea and Amen, in whom there is no shadow of change, communicate to me, I beseech thee, such a stability of mind, that I may no more thus start aside like a broken bow; but that, having my heart whole with thee, I may continue stedfast in thy covenant, that not one good purpose, which thy Spirit hath raised in me this day, may vanish, as so many have formerly done; but that they may bring forth fruit unto life eternal. Grant this, O merciful Father, through the merits and mediation of my crucified Saviour.

A Prayer of Intercession, to be used either before or after the Receiving of the Sacrament.

O Most gracious Lord, who so tenderly lovedst mankind, as to give thy dear Son out of thy bosom to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, grant that the effect of this redemption may be as universal, as the design of it, that it may be to the salvation of all. O let no person, by impenitence and wilful sin, forfeit his part in it; but by the power of thy grace bring all, even the most obstinate sinners to repentance. Enlighten all that sit in darkness, all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks; take from them all blindness, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, unto thy fold, that they may be saved among the number of the true *Israelites*. And for all those, upon whom the name of thy Son is called, grant, O Lord, that their conversations may be such, as becometh the Gospel of Christ; that his name be no longer blasphemed among the Heathens through us. O blessed Lord, how long shall *Christendom* continue the vilest part of the world, a sink of all those abominable pollutions, which even Barbarians detest? O let not our profession and our practice be always at so wide a distance. Let not the Disciples of the holy and immaculate Jesus be of all others the most profane and impure. Let not the subjects of the Prince of peace be of all others the most contentious and bloody; but make us Christians in deed, as well as in name, that we may walk worthy of that holy vocation wherewith we are called, and may all with one mind and one mouth glorifie thee the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Have mercy on this languishing Church, look down from Heaven, the habitation of thy holiness, and of thy glory. Where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards us? Are they restrained? Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: But though our backslidings are many, and we have grievously rebelled, yet, according to all thy goodness, let thy anger and thy fury be turned away, and cause thy face to shine upon thy Sanctuary which is desolate, for the Lord's sake; and so separate between us and our sins, that they may no longer separate between us and our God. Save and defend all Christian Kings, Princes, and Governours, especially those to whom we owe subjection; plead thou their cause, O Lord, against those that strive with them, and fight thou against those that fight against them; and so guide and assist them in the discharge of that office whereunto thou hast appointed them, that under them we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Bless them that wait at thine Altar, open thou their lips, that their mouth may shew forth thy praise. O let not the lights of the world be put under bushels, but place them in their candlesticks, that they may give light to all that are in the house. Let not *Jeroboam's* priests profane thy service, but let the seed of *Aaron* still minister before thee. And, O thou Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, succour and relieve all that are in affliction: Deliver the outcast and poor, help them to right that suffer wrong, let the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners come before thee, and, according to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou those that are appointed to die; grant ease to those that are in pain, supplies to those that suffer want, give to all presumptuous sinners a sense of their sins, and to all despairing a sight of thy mercies; and do thou, O Lord, for every one abundantly above what they can ask or think. Forgive my enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and turn their hearts. Pour down thy blessings on all my friends and benefactors, all who have commended themselves to my Prayers. [*Here thou mayst name particular persons.*] And grant, O merciful Father, that through this blood of the Cross we may all be presented pure and unblameable, and unreproveable in thy sight; that so we may be admitted into that place of purity, where no unclean thing can enter, there to sing eternal praises to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for ever.

A Prayer in times of common Persecution.

O Blessed Saviour, who hast made the Cross the badge of thy Disciples, enable me, I beseech thee, willingly and chearfully to embrace it: Thou seest, O Lord, I am fallen into days, wherein he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: O make me so readily to expose all my outward concernments, when my obedience to thee requireth it, that what falls as a prey to men, may by thee be accepted as a sacrifice to God. Lord, preserve me so by thy grace, that I never suffer as an evil doer;

doer; and then, O Lord, if it be my lot to suffer as a Christian, let me not be asham-ed, but rejoyce that I am counted worthy to suffer for thy name. O thou, who for my sake enduredst the cross, and despisedst the shame, let the example of that love and patience prevail against all the tremblings of my corrupt heart, that no terrours may ever be able to shake my constancy; but that, how long soever thou shalt per-mit the rod of the wicked to lie on my back, I may never put my hand unto wicked-ness. Lord, thou knowest whereof I am made, thou remembrest that I am but flesh; and flesh, O Lord, shrinks at the approach of any thing grievous. It is thy Spirit, thy Spirit alone that can uphold me: O establish me with thy free Spirit, that I be not weary and faint in my mind. And by how much the greater thou discernest my weak-ness, so much the more do thou shew forth thy power in me; and make me, O Lord, in all temptations, stedfastly to look to thee, the author and finisher of my faith; that so I may run the race which is set before me, and resist even unto blood, striving against sin. O dear Jesus, hear me; and tho' Satan desire to have me, that he may winnow me as wheat, yet do thou, O blessed Mediatour, pray for me, that my faith fail not; but that, tho' it be tried with fire, it may be found unto praise, and glory, and honour, at thy appearing. And, O Lord, I beseech thee, grant that I may pre-serve not only constancy towards God, but charity also towards men, even those whom thou shalt permit to be the instruments of my sufferings: Lord, let me not fail to imitate that admirable meekness of thine, in loving and praying for my greatest perse-cutors: And do thou, O Lord, overcome all their evil with thy infinite goodness, turn their hearts, and draw them powerfully to thy self, and at last receive both me and mine enemies into those mansions of peace and rest, where thou reignest with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, one God, for ever.

A Prayer in Time of Affliction.

O Just and holy Lord, who with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, I desire un-feignedly to humble my self under thy mighty hand, which now lies heavy upon me: I heartily acknowledge, O Lord, that all I do, all I can suffer, is but the due reward of my deeds; and therefore, in thy severest inflictions, I must still say, Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. But, O Lord, I be-seech thee, in judgment remember mercy, and though my sins have enforced thee to strike, yet consider my weakness, and let not thy stripes be more heavy or more lasting than thou seest profitable for my Soul: Correct me, but with the chastisement of a father, not with the wounds of an enemy; and though thou take not off thy rod, yet take away thine anger. Lord, do not abhor my Soul, nor cast thy servant away in displeasure, but pardon my sins, I beseech thee; and if yet, in thy fatherly wisdom, thou see fit to prolong thy corrections, thy blessed will be done. I cast my self, O Lord, at thy feet, do with me what thou pleasest: Try me as silver is tried, so thou bring me out purified: And, Lord, make even my flesh also to subscribe to this resignation, that there may be nothing in me that may rebel against thy hand; but that, having perfectly suppressed all repining thoughts, I may chearfully drink of this cup: And, how bitter soever thou shalt please to make it, Lord, let it prove me-dicinal, and cure all the diseases of my Soul, that it may bring forth in me the peace-able fruit of righteousness; that so these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, may work for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, through Jesus Christ.

A Thanksgiving for Deliverance.

O Blessed Lord, who art gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kind-ness, and repentest thee of the evil; I thankfully acknowledge before thee, that thou hast not dealt with me after my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniqui-ties. My rebellions, O Lord, deserve to be scourged with scorpions, and thou hast corrected them only with a gentle and fatherly rod; neither hast thou suffered me to lie long under that, but hast given me a timely and a gracious issue out of my late distresses. O Lord, I will be glad, and rejoyce in thy mercy, for thou hast considered my trouble, and hast known my Soul in adversity. Thou hast smitten, and thou hast healed me. O let these various methods of thine have their proper effects upon my Soul, that I, who have felt the smart of thy chastisements, may stand in awe, and not sin: And that I, who have likewise felt the sweet refreshings of thy mercy, may have my heart ravished with it, and knit to thee in the firmest bands of love; and

that by both I may be preserved in a constant entire obedience to thee all my days, through Jesus Christ.

Directions for the Time of Sickness.

WHEN thou findest thy self visited with Sickness, thou art immediately to remember; that it is God, which with rebukes doth chasten man for sin. *And therefore let thy first care be to find out what it is that provokes him to smite thee; and to that purpose examine thine own heart, search diligently what guilts lie there, confess them humbly and penitently to God, and, for the greater security, renew thy repentance for all the old sins of thy former life; beg most earnestly and importunately his mercy and pardon in Christ Jesus, and put on sincere and zealous resolutions of forsaking every evil way for the rest of that time which God shall spare thee. And that thy own heart deceive thee not in this so weighty a business, it will be wisdom to send for some godly* Divine, *not only to assist thee with his Prayers, but with his counsel also. And to that purpose open thy heart so freely to him, that he may be able to judge whether thy repentance be such as may give thee confidence to appear before God's dreadful tribunal; and that, if it be not, he may help thee what he can towards the making it so. And when thou hast thus provided for thy better part, thy Soul, then consider thy body also: and as the Wise man saith,* Ecclus xxxviii. 12. Give place to the physician; for the Lord hath created him. *Use such means as may be most likely to recover thy health, but always remember that the success of them must come from God; and beware of* Asa's *sin, who* sought to the physicians, and not to the Lord, 2 *Chron.* xvi. 12. *Dispose also betimes of thy temporal affairs, by making thy* Will, *and setting all things in such order, as thou meanest finally to leave them in, and defer it not till thy Sickness grow more violent: for then perhaps thou shalt not have such use of thy Reason as may fit thee for it; or, if thou have, it will be then much more seasonable to employ thy thoughts on higher things, on the world thou art going to, rather than that thou art about to leave. We cannot carry the things of this world with us, when we go hence, and it is not fit we should carry the thoughts of them. Therefore let those be early dispatched, that they may not disturb thee at last.*

A Prayer for a Sick Person.

O Merciful and righteous Lord, the God of health and of sickness, of life and of death, I most unfeignedly acknowledge, that my great abuse of those many days of strength and welfare, which thou hast afforded me, hath most justly deserved thy present visitation. I desire, O Lord, humbly to accept of this punishment of mine iniquity, and to bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him. And, O thou merciful Father, who designest not the ruin, but the amendment of those, whom thou scourgest, I beseech thee by thy Grace so to sanctifie this correction of thine to me, that this sickness of my body may be a means of health to my Soul; make me diligent to search my heart, and do thou, O Lord, enable me to discover every accursed thing, how closely soever concealed there, that by the removal thereof, I may make way for the removal of this punishment. Heal my Soul, O Lord, which hath sinned against thee; and then, if it be thy blessed will, heal my body also; restore the voice of joy and health unto my dwelling, that I may live to praise thee, and to bring forth fruits of repentance. But if in thy wisdom thou hast otherwise disposed, if thou hast determined that this sickness shall be unto death, I beseech thee to fit and prepare me for it: Give me that sincere and earnest repentance, to which thou hast promised mercy and pardon; wean my heart from the world, and all its fading vanities, and make me to gasp and pant after those more excellent and durable joys, which are at thy right hand for ever. Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and, in all the pains of my body, in all the agonies of my spirit, let thy comforts refresh my Soul, and enable me patiently to wait till my change come. And grant, O Lord, that when my earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, I may have a building of God, an house, not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens; and that for his sake, who, by his precious blood, hath purchased it for me, even Jesus Christ.

A Thankſgiving for Recovery.

O Gracious Lord, the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh, in whoſe hand my time is, I praiſe and magnifie thee, that thou haſt, in love to my Soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption, and reſtored me to health again. It is thou alone, O Lord, that haſt preſerved my life from deſtruction; thou haſt chaſten'd and corrected me, but thou haſt not given me over unto death. O let this life, which thou haſt thus graciouſly ſpared, be wholly conſecrated to thee. Behold, O Lord, I am by thy mercy made whole, O make me ſtrictly careful to ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto me. Lord, let not this reprieve thou haſt now given me, make me ſecure, as thinking that my Lord delayeth his coming; but grant me, I beſeech thee, to make a right uſe of this long ſuffering of thine, and ſo to employ every minute of that time thou ſhalt allow me, that when thou ſhalt appear, I may have confidence, and not be aſhamed before thee at thy coming. Lord, I have found by this approach towards death, how dreadful a thing it is to be taken unprepared: O let it be a perpetual admonition to me to watch for my Maſter's coming: And when the pleaſures of ſin ſhall preſent themſelves to entice me, O make me to remember how bitter they will be at the laſt. O Lord, hear me, and as thou haſt in much mercy afforded me time, ſo grant me alſo grace to work out my own ſalvation, to provide oil in my lamp, that when the Bridegroom cometh, I may go in with him to the marriage. Grant this, I beſeech thee, for thy dear Son's ſake.

A Prayer at the Approach of Death.

O Eternal and everliving God, who firſt breathedſt into man the breath of life, and when thou takeſt away that breath he dies, and is turned again to his duſt; look with compaſſion on me thy poor creature, who am now drawing near the gates of Death, and, which is infinitely more terrible, the bar of Judgment. Lord, my own heart condemns me, and thou art infinitely greater than my heart, and knoweſt all things. The ſins I know and remember fill me with horror: But there are alſo multitudes of others, which I either obſerved not at that time, or have ſince careleſly forgot, which are all preſent to thee. Thou ſetteſt my miſdeeds before thee, and my ſecret ſins in the light of thy countenance; and to what a mountainous heap muſt the minutely provocations of ſo many years ariſe? How long ſhall one ſo ungodly ſtand in thy judgment, or ſuch a ſinner in the congregation of the righteous? And to add yet more to my terror, my very repentance, I fear, will not abide the trial; my frequent relapſes heretofore have ſufficiently witneſſed the inſincerity of my paſt reſolutions. And then, O Lord, what can ſecure me, that my preſent diſlikes of my ſins are not rather the effects of my amazing danger, than of any real change? And, O Lord, I know thou art not mocked, nor wilt accept of any thing that is not perfectly ſincere. O Lord, when I conſider this, fearfulneſs and trembling come upon me, and an horrible dread overwhelmeth me: My fleſh trembleth for fear of thee, and my heart is wounded within me. But, O Lord, one deep calleth upon another, the depth of my miſery upon the depth of thy mercy: Lord, ſave now, or I periſh eternally. O thou, who willeſt not that any ſhould periſh, but that all would come to repentance, bring me, I beſeech thee, though thus late, to a ſincere repentance, ſuch as thou wilt accept, who trieſt the heart. Create in me, O God, a clean heart, and renew a right ſpirit within me. Lord, one day is with thee as a thouſand years; O let thy mighty Spirit work in me now in this my laſt day, whatſoever thou ſeeſt wanting to fit me for thy mercy and acceptation. Give me a perfect and intire hatred of my ſins, and enable me to preſent thee with that ſacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, which thou haſt promiſed not to deſpiſe; that by this I may be made capable of that atonement, which thy dear Son hath, by the more excellent oblation of himſelf, made for all repenting ſinners. He is the Propitiation for our ſin, he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities, the chaſtiſement of our peace was on him: O heal me by his ſtripes, and let the cry of his blood drown the clamour of my ſins. I am indeed a child of wrath, but he is the Son of thy love; for his ſake ſpare me, O Lord, ſpare thy creature, whom he hath redeemed with his moſt precious blood, and be not angry with me for ever. In his wounds, O Lord, I take Sanctuary, O let not thy vengeance purſue me to this City of refuge: My ſoul hangeth upon him, O let me not periſh with a Jeſus, with a Saviour in my arms; but by his Agony and bloody Sweat, by his Croſs and Paſſion, by all that he did and ſuffered

for

for sinners, good Lord, deliver me: Deliver me, I beseech thee, from the wages of my sins: thy wrath and everlasting damnation, in this time of my tribulation, in the hour of Death, and in the day of judgment. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, and do not now repay my former neglects of thy calls, by refusing to answer me in this time of my greatest need. Lord, there is but a step between me and death, O let not my sun go down upon thy wrath; but seal my pardon before I go hence, and be no more seen. Thy loving kindness is better than the life it self, O let me have that in exchange, and I shall most gladly lay down this mortal life. Lord, thou knowest all my desire, and my groaning is not hid from thee; deal thou with me, O Lord, according to thy name; for sweet is thy mercy: Take away the sting of Death, the guilt of my sins, and then, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no evil; I will lay me down in peace, and, Lord, when I awake up, let me be satisfied with thy presence in thy glory. Grant this, merciful God, for his sake, who is both the Redeemer and Mediator of sinners, even Jesus Christ.

PSALMS.

PUT me not to rebuke, O Lord, in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy heavy displeasure.

There is no health in my flesh because of thy displeasure, neither is there any rest in my bones, by reason of my sins.

For my wickednesses are gone over my head, and are a sore burden too heavy for me to bear.

My wounds stink, and are corrupt, through my foolishness.

Therefore is my spirit vexed within me, and my heart within me is desolate.

My sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up: yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me.

But thou, O Lord God, art full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, plenteous in goodness and truth. Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and in misery.

If thou, Lord, shouldst be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?

O remember not the sins and offences of my youth; but according to thy mercy think thou upon me for thy goodness.

Look upon my adversity and misery, and forgive me all my sins.

Hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble: O haste thee, and hear me.

Out of the deep do I call unto thee, Lord, hear my voice.

Turn thee, O Lord, and deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercy's sake.

O go not from me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help.

I stretch forth my hands unto thee, my soul gaspeth unto thee as a thirsty land.

Draw nigh unto my soul, and save it: O deliver me, because of my enemies.

For my soul is full of trouble, and my life draweth nigh unto Hell.

Save me from the lion's mouth, hear me from among the horns of the unicorns.

O set me up upon the rock that is higher than I, for thou art my hope, and a strong tower for me against the enemy.

Why art thou so heavy, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me?

Put thy trust in God, for I will yet give him thanks for the help of his countenance.

The Lord shall make good his loving kindness towards me, yea, thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: despise not thou the work of thine own hands.

O GOD, thou art my God, early will I seek thee.

My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh also longeth after thee, in a barren and dry land, where no water is.

Like as the hart desireth the water-brook, so longeth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God: When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?

How amiable are thy dwellings, O Lord of Hosts!

My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord: My flesh and my heart rejoyceth in the living God.

O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.

O send out thy light and thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy dwelling.

For one day in thy courts is better than a thousand.

I had

I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

I should utterly have fainted, but that I believed verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Thou art my helper and my redeemer: O Lord, make no long tarrying.

EJACULATIONS.

O LORD, of whom may I seek for succour but of thee, who for my sins art justly displeased? Yet, O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver me not into the bitter pains of eternal death.

Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of my heart, shut not up thy merciful ears to my prayer; but hear me, O Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour: Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer me not at my last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee.

Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy child; yet, O Lord, do not thou cast off the bowels and compassions of a Father; but even as a father pitieth his own children, so be thou merciful unto me.

Lord, the prince of this world cometh, O let him have nothing in me; but, as he accuseth, do thou absolve: He lays many and grievous things to my charge, which he can too well prove: I have nothing to say for my self, do thou answer for me, O Lord, my God.

O Lord, I am clothed with filthy garments, and Satan stands at my right hand to resist me: O be thou pleased to rebuke him, and pluck me as a brand out of the fire; cause mine iniquities to pass from me, and clothe me with the righteousness of thy Son.

Behold, O God, the Devil is coming towards me, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. O save and deliver me, lest he devour my soul like a lion, and tear it in pieces while there is none to help.

O my God, I know that no unclean thing can enter into thy kingdom, and I am nothing but pollution; my very righteousnesses are as filthy rags. O wash me and make me white in the blood of the Lamb, that so I may be fit to stand before thy throne.

Lord, the snares of death compass me round about, O let not the pains of hell also take hold upon me: But, though I find trouble and heaviness, yet, O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

O dear Jesus, who hast bought me with the precious price of thine own Blood; challenge now thy purchase, and let not the malice of hell pluck me out of thy hand.

O blessed High Priest, who art able to save them to the utmost, who come unto God by thee, save me, I beseech thee, who have no hope, but on thy merits and intercession.

O God, I confess I have defaced that image of thine, thou didst imprint upon my soul; yet, O thou faithful Creator, have pity on thy creature.

O Jesu, I have by my many and grievous sins crucified thee afresh; yet thou, who prayedst for thy persecutors, intercede for me also, and suffer not, O my Redeemer, my soul (the price of thy blood) to perish.

O Spirit of Grace, I have by my horrid impieties done despite to thee; yet, O blessed Comforter, though I have often grieved thee, be thou pleased to succour and relieve me, and say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

Mine eyes look unto thee, O Lord, in thee is my trust, O cast not out my soul.

O Lord, in thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded.

O Blessed Lord, who scourgest every son whom thou receivest, let me not be weary of thy correction, but give me such a perfect subjection to thee the Father of spirits, that this chastisement may be for my profit, that I may thereby be partaker of thy holiness.

O thou Captain of my salvation, who wert made perfect by sufferings, sanctifie to me all the pains of body, all the terrors of mind, which thou shalt permit to fall upon me.

Lord, my sins have deserved eternal torments, make me chearfully and thankfully to bear my present pains; chasten me as thou pleasest here, that I may not be condemned with the world.

Lord

Lord, the waters are come in even unto my soul, O let thy Spirit move upon these waters, and make them like the pool of *Bethesda*, that they may cure whatsoever spiritual disease thou discernest in me.

O Christ, who first sufferedst many and grievous things, and then entredst into thy glory, make me so to suffer with thee, that I may also be glorified with thee.

O dear Jesus, who humbledst thy self to the Death of the Cross for me, let that Death of thine sweeten the bitterness of mine.

When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

I believe that thou shalt come to be my Judge.

I pray thee therefore help thy servant, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood.

Make me to be numbred with thy Saints in glory everlasting.

Thou art the Resurrection and the Life, he that believeth in thee, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.

My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better: Lord, I groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with that house from Heaven.

I desire to put off this my tabernacle: O be pleased to receive me into everlasting habitations.

Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto thy name.

Lord, I am here to wrestle, not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness. O take me from these tents of *Kedar*, into the heavenly *Jerusalem*, where Satan shall be utterly trodden under my feet.

I cannot here attend one minute to thy service without distraction: O take me up to stand before thy throne, where I shall serve thee day and night.

I am here in heaviness through many tribulations, O receive me into that place of rest, where all tears shall be wiped from my eyes, where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain.

I am here in the state of banishment and absence from the Lord: O take me where I shall for ever behold thy face, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.

O Blessed Jesu, who hast loved me, and washed me from my sins in thine own blood, receive my soul.

Into thy hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth. Come, Lord Jesu, come quickly.

PRAYERS for their Use, who Mourn in Secret for the *Publick Calamities*, &c.

PSALM LXXIV.

I.

O God, wherefore art thou absent from us so long? Why is thy Wrath so hot against the Sheep of thy Pasture? &c.

Psal. lxxix. *O God, the Heathen are come into thine Inheritance: Thy holy Temple have they defiled, and made* Jerusalem *an heap of stones*, &c.

Psal. lxxx. *Hear, O thou Shepherd of* Israel, *thou that leadest* Joseph *like a sheep; shew thy self also, thou that sittest upon the Cherubims*, &c.

A Prayer to be used in these Times of Calamity.

O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, I desire humbly to confess before thee, both on my own behalf, and that of this nation, that these many years of Calamity we have groaned under, are but the just, yea, mild, returns of those many

many more years of our provocations against thee; and that thy present wrath is but the due punishment of thy abused mercy. O Lord, thou hast formerly abounded to us in blessings above all the people of the earth. Thy candle shined upon our heads, and we delighted our selves in thy great goodness: Peace was within our walls, and plenteousness within our palaces; there was no decay, no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets: But we turned this grace into wantonness; we abused our peace to security, our plenty to riot and luxury; and made those good things, which should have endeared our hearts to thee, the occasion of estranging them from thee. Nay, O Lord, thou gavest us yet more precious mercies, thou wert pleased thy self to pitch thy tabernacle with us, to establish a pure and glorious Church among us, and give us thy Word to be a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths. But, O Lord, we have made no other use of that light, than to conduct us to the chambers of death: We have dealt proudly, and not hearkned to thy commandments, and by rebelling against the light, have purchased to our selves so much the heavier portion in the outer darkness. And now, O Lord, had the overflowings of thy vengeance been answerable to that of our sin, we had long since been swept away with a swift destruction, and there had been none of us alive at this day, to implore thy mercy. But thou art a gracious God, slow to anger, and hast proceeded with us with much patience and long-suffering; thou hast sent thy judgments to awaken us to repentance, and hast also allowed us space for it: But, alas! we have perverted this mercy of thine beyond all the former; we return not to him that smiteth us, neither do we seek the Lord; we are slidden back by a perpetual back-sliding, no man repenteth him of his wickedness, or saith, What have I done? 'Tis true, indeed, we fear the rod (we dread every suffering, so that we are ready to buy it off with the foulest sin) but we fear not him that hath appointed it; but, by a wretched obstinacy, harden our necks against thee, and refuse to return. And now, O GOD, what balm is there in *Gilead* that can cure us, who, when thou wouldst heal us, will not be healed? We know thou hast pronounced, that there is no peace to the wicked; and how shall we then pray for peace, that still retain our wickedness? This, this, O Lord, is our sorest disease: O give us medicines to heal this sickness: Heal our Souls, and then we know thou canst soon heal our land. Lord, thou hast long spoken by thy Word to our ears, by thy Judgments even to all our senses; but unless thou speak by thy Spirit to our hearts, all other calls will still be ineffectual. O send out this voice, and that a mighty voice, such as may awake us out of this lethargy: Thou that didst call *Lazarus* out of the grave, O be pleased to call us, who are dead, yea, putrified in trespasses and sins, and make us to awake to righteousness. And though, O Lord, our frequent resistances, even of those inward calls, have justly provoked thee to give us up to the lusts of our own heart; yet, O thou boundless ocean of mercy, who art good not only beyond what we can deserve, but what we can wish, do not withdraw the influence of thy grace, and take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Thou wert found of those that sought thee not: O let that act of mercy be repeated to us, who are so desperately, yet so insensibly sick, that we cannot so much as look after the Physician; and by how much our case is the more dangerous, so much the more sovereign remedies do thou apply. Lord, help us, and consider not so much our unworthiness of thy aid, as our irremediable ruin, if we want it: Save, Lord, or we perish eternally. To this end, dispense to us in our temporal interest, what thou seest may best secure our spiritual: If a greater degree of outward misery will tend to the curing our inward, Lord, spare not thy rod, but strike yet more sharply. Cast out this Devil, though with never so much foaming and tearing. But if thou seest that some return of mercy may be most likely to melt us, O be pleased so far to condescend to our wretchedness, as to afford us that; and whether by thy sharper, or thy gentler methods, bring us home to thy self: And then, O Lord, we know thy hand is not shortned, that it cannot save: When thou hast delivered us from our sins, thou canst and wilt deliver us from our troubles. O shew us thy mercy, and grant us thy salvation, that being redeemed, both in our bodies and spirits, we may glorify thee in both, in a chearful obedience, and praise the name of our God, that hath dealt wonderfully with us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Prayer for this Church.

O Thou great God of recompenses, who turnest a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein: Thou hast most justly executed that fatal sentence on this Church, which having once been the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth, is now become a scorn and derision to all that

are round about her. O Lord, what could have been done to thy vineyard, that thou hast not done in it? And since it hath brought forth nothing but wild grapes, it is perfectly just with thee to take away the hedge thereof, and let it be eaten up. But, O Lord, though our iniquities testifie against us, yet do thou it for thy name's sake; for our backslidings are many, we have sinned against thee. O the hope of *Israel*, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, as a way faring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished? as a mighty man that cannot save? Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name, leave us not; deprive us of what outward enjoyment thou pleasest; take from us the opportunities of our luxury, and it may be a mercy; but, O take not from us the means of our reformation, for that is the most direful expression of thy wrath. And tho' we have hated the light, because our deeds were evil, yet, O Lord, do not, by withdrawing it, condemn us to walk on still in darkness, but let it continue to shine, till it hath guided our feet into the way of peace. O Lord, arise, stir up thy strength, and come and help, and deliver not the soul of thy Turtle Dove [*this disconsolate Church.*] unto the multitude of the enemy; but help her, O God, and that right early. But if, O Lord, our rebellions have so provoked thee, that the *Ark must wander in the Wilderness, till all this murmuring Generation be consumed*, yet let not that perish with us, but bring it at last into a *Canaan*, and *let our more innocent posterity see that which in thy just judgment thou deniest to us.* In the mean time, let us not cease to bewail that desolation our sins have wrought, to think upon the stones of *Sion*, and pity to see her in the dust, nor ever be ashamed or afraid to own her in her lowest and most persecuted condition, but esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of *Egypt*, and so approve our constancy to this our afflicted Mother, that her blessed Lord and Head may own us with mercy, when he shall come in the glory of thee his Father, with the holy Angels. Grant this, merciful Lord, for the same Jesus Christ his sake.

A Prayer for the Peace of the Church.

LORD Jesus Christ, which of thine Almightiness madest all creatures both visible and invisible, which of thy godly wisdom governest and settest all things in most goodly order, which of thine unspeakable goodness keepest, defendest, and furtherest all things; which of thy deep mercy restorest the decayed, renewest the fallen, raisest the dead; vouchsafe, we pray thee, at last to cast down thy countenance upon thy well-beloved spouse the Church; but let it be that amiable and merciful countenance wherewith thou pacifiest all things in Heaven, in Earth, and whatsoever is above Heaven, and under the Earth. Vouchsafe to cast upon us those tender and pitiful eyes, with which thou didst once behold *Peter*, that great shepherd of thy Church, and forthwith he remembred himself, and repented; with which eyes thou once didst view the scatter'd multitude, and wert moved with compassion, that for lack of a good Shepherd, they wandred as sheep dispersed and strayed asunder. Thou seest, O good Shepherd, what sundry sorts of wolves have broken into thy sheep-cotes; so that if it were possible, the very perfect persons should be brought into error: Thou seest with what winds, with what waves, with what storms, thy silly ship is toss'd, thy ship wherein thy little flock is in peril to be drowned. And what is now left, but that it utterly sink, and we all perish? For this tempest and storm we may thank our own wickedness, and sinful living; we discern it well, and confess it; we discern thy righteousness, and we bewail our unrighteousness; but we appeal to thy mercy, which surmounteth all thy works: We have now suffered much punishment, being scourged with so many wars, consumed with such losses of goods, shaken with so many floods; and yet appears there no where any haven or port unto us. Being thus tired and forlorn among so strange evils, but still every day more grievous punishments, and more seem to hang over our heads, we complain not of thy sharpness, most tender Saviour, but we discern here also thy mercy, forasmuch as much grievouser plagues we have deserved. But, O most merciful Jesus, we beseech thee, that thou wilt not consider, nor weigh what is due for our deservings; but rather, what becometh thy mercy, without which, neither the Angels in Heaven can stand sure before thee, much less we silly vessels of clay. Have mercy on us, O Redeemer, which art easie to be intreated; not that we be worthy of thy mercy, but give thou this Glory unto thine own name. Suffer not those, which either have not known thee, or do envy thy Glory, continually to triumph over us, and say, Where is their God? Where is their Redeemer? Where is their Saviour? Where is their bridegroom, that they thus

boast on? These opprobrious words redound unto thee, O Lord, while by our evils men weigh and esteem thy goodness, they think we be forsaken, whom they see not amended. Once when thou slepst in the ship, and a tempest suddenly arising, threatned death to all in the ship, thou awokest at the out-cry of a few Disciples, and straightway, at thine Almighty word, the waters couched, the winds fell, the storm was suddenly turned into a great calm; the dumb waters knew their Maker's voice. Now in this far greater tempest, wherein not a few mens bodies be in danger, but innumerable souls; we beseech thee, at the cry of thy holy Church, which is in danger of drowning, that thou wilt awake. So many thousands of men do cry, *Lord, save us, we perish!* the tempest is past man's power; it is thy word that must do the deed. Lord Jesu, only say thou with a word of thy mouth, *Cease, O tempest, and forthwith shall the desired calm appear.* Thou wouldst have spared so many thousands of most wicked men, if in the city of *Sodom* had been found but ten good men. Now here be so many thousands of men which love the glory of thy name, which sigh for the beauty of thy house; and wilt thou not, at these mens Prayers, let go thine anger, and remember thine accustomed and old mercies? Shalt thou not, with thy heavenly policy, turn our folly into thy glory? Shalt thou not turn the wicked mens evils into thy Church's good? For thy mercy is wont then most of all to succour, when the thing is with us past remedy, and neither the might nor wisdom of men can help it. Thou alone bringest things that be never so out of order, into order again, which art the only author and maintainer of Peace. Thou framedst that old confusion, wherein, without order, without fashion, confusedly lay the discordant seeds of things; and with a wonderful order the things of nature, that fought together, thou didst allay and knit in a perpetual band. But how much greater confusion is this, where is no charity, no fidelity, no bonds of love, no reverence, neither of laws, nor yet of rulers; no agreement of opinions, but, as it were, in a misordered choir, every man singeth a contrary note. Among the heavenly planets is no dissention, the elements keep their place, every one do the office whereunto they be appointed: And wilt thou suffer thy Spouse, for whose sake all things were made, thus by continual discords to perish? Shalt thou suffer the wicked spirits, which be the authors and workers of discord, to bear such a swing in thy Kingdom uncheck'd? Shalt thou suffer the strong captain of mischief, whom thou once overthrewest, again to invade thy tents, and to spoil thy soldiers? When thou wert here a man conversant among men, at thy voice fled the Devils. Send forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy Spirit, which may drive away out of the breasts of all them that profess thy name, the wicked spirits, masters of riot, of covetousness, of vain glory, of carnal lust, of mischief and discord. *Create in us, O our God and King, a clean heart, and renew thy Holy Spirit in our breasts: Pluck not from us thy Holy Ghost: Render unto us the joy of thy saving health, and with thy principal Spirit strengthen thy Spouse and the Herdsmen thereof.* By this Spirit thou reconciledst the earthly to the heavenly: By this thou didst frame and reduce so many tongues, so many nations, so many sundry sorts of men, into one body of a Church; which body, by the same Spirit, is knit to thee their Head. This Spirit, if thou wilt vouchsafe to renew in all mens hearts, then shall all these foreign miseries cease; or if they cease not, they shall turn to the profit and avail of them which love thee. Stay this confusion, set in order this horrible Chaos, O Lord Jesus, let thy Spirit stretch out it self upon these waters of evil, wavering opinions. And because thy Spirit, which, according to thy Prophet's saying, *containeth all things*, hath also the science of speaking; make, that like as unto all them which be of thy House is one Light, one Baptism, one God, one hope, one Spirit, so they may also have one voice, one note, one song, professing one catholick truth. When thou didst mount up to Heaven triumphantly, thou threwest out from above thy precious things, thou gavest gifts among men, thou dealtest sundry rewards of thy Spirit. Renew again from above thy old bountifulness, give that thing to thy Church, now fainting and growing downward, that thou gavest unto her shooting up at her first beginning. Give unto Princes and Rulers the grace so to stand in awe of thee, that they may so guide the Common-weal, as they should shortly render account unto thee, that art the KING of Kings. Give wisdom to be always assistant unto them, that whatsoever is best to be done, they may espy it in their minds, and pursue the same in their doings. Give to the Bishops the gift of prophecy, that they may declare and interpret Holy Scripture, not of their own brain, but of thine inspiring. Give them the threefold charity which thou once demandedst of *Peter*, what time thou didst betake unto him the charge of thy sheep. Give to the Priest the love of soberness and of chastity. Give to thy people a good

will

will to follow thy Commandments, and a readineſs to obey ſuch perſons as thou haſt appointed over them. So ſhall it come to paſs, if through thy gift thy Princes ſhall command that thou requireſt, if thy Paſtors and Herdſmen ſhall teach the ſame, and thy people obey them both, that the old dignity and tranquillity of the Church ſhall return again, with a goodly order, unto the glory of thy name. Thou ſparedſt the *Ninevites* appointed to be deſtroyed, as ſoon as they converted to repentance; and wilt thou deſpiſe thy Houſe falling down at thy feet, which, inſtead of ſackcloth, hath ſighs, and, inſtead of aſhes, tears? Thou promiſeſt forgiveneſs to ſuch as turn unto thee, but this ſelf thing is thy gift, a man to turn with his whole heart unto thee, to the intent all our goodneſs ſhould redound unto thy glory. Thou art the Maker, repair the work that thou haſt faſhioned. Thou art the Redeemer, ſave that thou haſt bought. Thou art the Saviour, ſuffer not them to periſh which do hang on thee. Thou art the Lord and owner, challenge thy poſſeſſion. Thou art the Head, help thy members. Thou art the King, give us a reverence of thy Laws. Thou art the Prince of Peace, breathe upon us brotherly love. Thou art the God, have pity on thy humble beſeechers, be thou according to *Paul's* ſaying, *All things in all men*, to the intent the whole choir of thy Church, with agreeing minds and conſonant voices for mercy obtained at thy hands, may give thanks unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; which, after the moſt perfect example of concord, be diſtinguiſhed in property of perſons, and one in nature: To whom be praiſe and glory eternally. *Amen.*

A PRAYER for the KING'S MAJESTY, out of the *Liber Regalis.*

GOD, the unſpeakable Author of the world, Creator of men, Governour of empires, and Eſtabliſher of all kingdoms, who, out of the loins of our Father Abraham, *didſt chuſe a King that became the Saviour of all Kings and nations of the earth, bleſs, we beſeech thee, thy faithful ſervant, and our dread ſovereign Lord, King* GEORGE, *with the richeſt bleſſings of thy grace. Eſtabliſh him in the throne of his kingdom by thy mighty aid and protection; viſit him as thou didſt viſit* Moſes *in the buſh,* Joſhua *in the battle,* Gideon *in the field, and* Samuel *in the Temple. Let the dew of thine abundant mercies fall upon his head, and give him the bleſſing of* David *and* Solomon. *Be unto him an helmet of ſalvation againſt the face of his enemies, and a ſtrong tower of defence in the time of adverſity. Let his reign be proſperous, and his days many. Let peace, and love, and holineſs, let juſtice, and truth, and all Chriſtian virtues, flouriſh in his time. Let his people ſerve him with honour and obedience: And let him ſo duly ſerve thee here on earth, that he may hereafter everlaſtingly reign with thee in* Heaven, *through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Amen.

F I N I S.

THE
CAUSES
OF THE
Decay of Chriſtian Piety.
OR AN
IMPARTIAL SURVEY
Of the RUINS of
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,
Undermin'd by
UNCHRISTIAN PRACTICE.

WRITTEN BY
The Author of *The Whole Duty of Man.*

LONDON:
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THE PREFACE.

1. THOUGH this be the first appearance this Tract has made in the world, yet its being is of somewhat a more antient date; it having received its lineaments and perfect form some years since, when the Author not having partiality enough to think it worthy publick view, had judg'd it, if not to perpetual darkness, yet at least to a long indefinite suspension from seeing light. In this interval, 'tis more than probable some passages may have lost much of their propriety to the present state of affairs, they having been adapted to circumstances which may since have received some change: And herein I must bespeak the reader's candor, to make such allowances as the matter shall require; of which yet I suppose there will not occur very many, or very important occasions.

The time of writing this Treatise.

2. But would God I were to apologize for a yet far greater absurdity, that our scene were so shifted, that the whole design of the ensuing discourse might become one entire impertinence, and that our more eminent conformity to the rules of our Christian institution might supersede these disquisitions about our failances and aberrations. But alas! I find I have pitcht upon a subject not like to be out-dated; vice daily gaining not only strength, but impudence: Nay, we are not only become witnesses against our selves, by declaring our sin as Sodom, but we have forced God also to attest against us, by punishing us in a manner no less conspicuous and manifest. And surely then 'tis more than time for us to take the Prophet's advice, Hag. 1. 7. to consider our ways, to reflect not only on those robust gyant-like provocations which have thus bid defiance to Heaven, but also to sift out those secret incendiaries that have inflamed us to this mad daring; to examine what that חמר, that inflammable bitumen, the untemper'd mortar is, with which we build our Babel, by discovering those misperswasions and false confidences, wherein many of our other guilts are founded: In order to which this slight Tract offers its feeble, yet well-meant aids; being forced out of its retirement, and like Crœsus's dumb son, compell'd to speak by impulse of the present exigent: And how despicable soever the mite contributed be in it self, yet if it may provoke the more wealthy to cast in richer gifts, it may prove no unprofitable agent for the corban. 'Tis evident this is a season which not only warrants, but exacts the most importunate endeavours of persuading men to those things that belong to their peace.

The occasion of publishing it.

3. For although 'tis true, that every state of Sin sets us also in a state of hostility with God, yet our present condition seems to have advanced us beyond the common degrees even of that. 'Tis, we know, high insolence against a prince, to despise and violate his laws, but when to that are superadded contumelies, and design'd affronts to his person, this is such an accumulated outrage, as will vanquish the most resolv'd patience. And this, alas! appears to be our case: We have long indulg'd to our selves the breach of all divine laws, gratified every appetite, every passion and lust with the forfeiture of our allegiance, and as if this would not serve to render us irreconcileable enough to God, we are now grown to subjoyn malice to licentiousness; project not so much to please our selves, as to displease Him; profess a contempt not only of his commands, but Himself; and seek no less to dethrone Him, than abrogate those. Thus have we made it a kind of personal quarrel, and by those impious blasphemies we daily dart against Heaven, do, as it were, dare the divine Majesty to vindicate it self. Whether his great longanimity may have given our Hectors a fancy, that they had vapour'd God (as they are used to do men) into a tameness, I shall not examine: But his late proceedings with us sufficiently testifie that he means no longer to decline our challenge. He now appears to avow the enmity as openly as we have done, and has already given us competent essays, how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. 10. 31.

Sins of this Age aggravated from the

4. 'Tis true indeed that he has formerly own'd his controversie with our land, and by a long series of great and heavy calamities attested himself the God to whom vengeance belongeth, Psal 94. 1. Yet as great monarchs use to quell lesser insurrections by their lieutenants, and subordinate officers, but when the rebellion grows high and desperate, then to encounter it in their own persons; so is it here observable, that God then chastised, and tried to reduce us by inferior instruments, found us out Lictors among our selves, and made one man's sin the punishment of another's: But now as if he had the same jealousie for his honour, which Joab had at the siege of Rabba, for David's, 2 Sam. 12. 28. as if he feared

greatness of our Judgments.

 to

to be reviv'd in the glory of our ruin, he takes us in his own hand, marks us out, as he did Pharaoh, *to be the trophies of his own peculiar vengeance, appearing signally against us in all the dreadful solemnities of an enraged enemy.*

Particular instances thereof, first, Of the Plague;

5. *For first, has he not, as* Moses *speaks,* Deut. 32. 41. *whet his glittering* sword? *Nay, has he not moreover (in the Scripture stile) made it drunk with blood? by sweeping away multitudes of us in a raging* PESTILENCE, *which marcht from one part of the nation to another in a kind of triumphant progress, as if it had receiv'd the same mandate God gave* Abraham, *Gen.* 13. 17. Arise, walk through the land, in the length thereof, and in the breadth thereof, for unto thee will I give it. *Whether it may not thus fatally compleat its course, notwithstanding the halt it seems to make, and pass from our* Dan *to our* Beersheba, *is a question that can with no probability be resolv'd in the negative; for as 'tis not to be doubted but there were in* Judea *as great sinners as those on whom the tower of* Siloam *fell,* Luke 13. *that those who have hitherto escaped have an equal share in the provoking cause of the judgment; so also that great* unsensibleness *many of us shew of what others groan under, is a very ominous abode, it being not only a dangerous symptom, but a probable means of drawing that calamity to our selves. When God sees we will suffer nothing by way of consent and sympathy with others, 'tis but equal we have our part in a more direct and immediate infliction, and feel what we would not compassionate.* Thucydides *mentions it as the effect of the great plague at* Athens, *that it had extinguish'd humanity; brought in a kind of ferity and barbarousness among them, rendring them openly villainous to men, and blasphemous against God;* θεῶν φόβος ἢ ἀνθρώπων νόμος ἐδεὶς ἀπεῖργε, *there was no restraint of law or religion, one part being desperate upon prospect of their danger, the other presumptuous upon the contemplation of their escape; and sure if we look impartially, ours will appear to have had somewhat of the same operation. Those compassions which the novelty it seems at first gave us to sufferers in this kind, seem now quite extinct; so unconcerned are we grown to every thing that touches us not in our individuals, as if we owned no relation to the* species *of mankind, though backt also with that closer tye, which the spiritual consanguinity has superseded. A pregnant indication of this may, I doubt not, be collected (as from many other circumstances, so particularly) from the great haste has in many places been made to lay aside those publick* humiliations *and intercessions, which were recommended to us, as well by the command of authority, as the common distress; but have been cast off without the substraction of either of those motives. Whether we are duly* mindful of the afflictions of Joseph, *that cannot afford one day in a month for a solemn reflection on them, I must leave to every man's conscience to discuss. But sure we are no less wanting to our selves than them, in this neglect; the office being no less designed for antidote, than cure, to prevent the judgment where it is not, than to remove it where it is: And if we will neither deprecate on our own behalfs, nor intercede on others, we are sure as improvident, as uncharitable, and may justly expect the fatal event of both.*

Secondly, Of the Fire.

6. *In the interim, although the present respite from destruction, and our own deceitful hearts flatter us, and say, Peace, peace; we have all reason to conclude that God is not atoned, the quarrel and hostility goes on, and his* hand is stretched out still, *Isa.* 5. 25. *And so indeed we find it in other dismal events, slaughter we know is not the only effect of war; which as it destroys the lives of many, blasts the supports and joys of more. This consequence of hostility we find well exprest by the Prophet,* Joel 2. 3. The land is as the garden of *Eden* before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness, *and herein also hath the Lord of Hosts, the great God of battle shewed himself mighty against us, he has invaded us not only with sword, but* FIRE: *And in so stupendious a manner desolated the glory of our land, that no humane fury could have procured, or even have wisht the like vastation and ruins.* That city which was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, *Lam.* 1. 1. lies buried in her own ashes, *and is both funeral-pile and urn to her self; and what neither foreign nor domestick enemies could in a succession of many ages effect, one blast of the breath of his displeasure,* Psal. 18. *has performed in a moment. So verifying even in a literal sense the Apostle's affirmation,* Heb. 12. 29. that our God is a consuming Fire. Plutarch *tells us, when* Fabius *sack'd* Tarentum, *he took not away their images, but said,* ἀπολείπωμεν τὲς θεὲς Ταραντίνοις κεχολωμένες, Let us leave the *Tarentines* their gods that are offended with them. *'Tis our calamity to be signally under the indignation of our incensed God, which in that great captain's judgment was somewhat more dreadful than the worst inflictions of war: For what industry soever has been used to entitle either the negligence or designs of men unto our overthrow, yet sure never any judgment had more legible marks of God's immediate hand, such as shew he meant to revenge the abuse of his former gentle methods; that those who would not be reformed by the slighter corrections wherein he dallied with them, might find a*

judgment worthy of God, *Wiſd.* 12. 26. *And ſure ſuch was this, which both for its greatneſs and irreſiſtibleneſs does well own its author, and ſhews his wrath was aſcended to a very exceſſive heat, that thus poured out it ſelf not only like, but in Fire,* Lam. 2. 4.

7. *I ſhall not here aſſume the Politician's part, and weigh the detriment we have ſuſtained by it in our civil intereſt, of which perhaps nothing but time and experience can give us a full eſtimate; it rather ſuits my deſign to obſerve what relates to our ſpiritual concerns, whilſt God's* dwelling-places *were involv'd in the ſame ruin with ours; his own peculiar portion not exempted, but as the Prophet complains,* Iſa. 64. 11. Our holy and beautiful houſes, where our fathers praiſed him, are burnt with fire. *This, though perhaps leaſt conſidered, is ſure not the leaſt ſad circumſtance; had only the ſcenes of our luxury or our fraud been deſtroyed, it might have ſent us with more fervency to the places of our devotion, and we might have frequented God's houſes the better, for being deſtitute of our own; but when theſe alſo are made parts of the common heap, 'tis a ſad teſtimonial that our very religion was provoking; that that pageant-like piety which we depoſited in our* CHURCHES, *only to make a ſhew with on holy-days, ſerved only to defile thoſe holy places, and render them ſo polluted, as required no ſlighter purgation than that of* FIRE. *'Tis, we know, not long ſince thoſe manſions, ſacred to the Prince of peace, were even in the vulgar obvious ſenſe made magazines for war; but yet more ſo in reference to that pulpit wild-fire, which ſet the nation in combuſtion; whether that ſtrange fire which ſome of our* Nadab's *and* Abihu's *introduced there, may not (even at this diſtance) have done its part to the drawing down this* FIRE *from Heaven, I leave to their ſerious reflection. But neither the* hypocrite *nor the* ſeditious *muſt ingroſs the guilt of this ruin: The* atheiſt *vyes with both; for alas! what ſhould God do with Temples among thoſe who pay him no worſhip? or why ſhould he let thoſe ſacred monuments remain among them, to whom all memorials of him ſerve but as occaſions and incentives to blaſpheme him? They have long ſaid with thoſe in* Job, Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways; *now 'tis but equitable (I had almoſt ſaid* civil) *to take them at their word, and no longer reſide among thoſe who avowedly diſclaim him.*

The burning of our Churches.

8. *And this, 'tis much to be feared, may be the portent of this diſmal vaſtation: We know men uſe not to deface thoſe houſes where they intend to inhabit; and ſure* this abhorring his ſanctuary, *and* caſting off his altar, *Lam.* 2. *is a dreadful ſign, that he means no longer to continue his reſidence among us: Indeed we find in Scripture, that his promiſe of cohabiting is always limited to thoſe who own themſelves his people; and therefore when ſo many of us have openly renounced that relation, we can with no juſtice expect the bleſſing appendant to it.*

God's withdrawing his gracious Preſence from us, which is oft followed by

9. *But perhaps this will ſeem to ſuch no formidable thing; God ſo withdrawing himſelf is but agreeable to their wiſhes, a kind of quitting the field to them, and ſo rather matter of complacency than regret: But 'tis to be conſidered, that there is another preſence of God that will infallibly ſucceed this; when he removes that of his grace, 'tis to make way for that of his anger; like the* Philiſtines, *we ſhall know the God of* Iſrael *is among us by his plagues,* 1 Sam. 5. *or to make a yet more dreadful compariſon, we ſhall, like the damned in* Hell, *diſcern his preſence only in the punitive effects of it, and read his nearneſs in our ſufferings. And ſure this will be but an ill exchange, even to the profaneſt of us; thoſe that have moſt deſpiſed or loathed the ſoft breathings of his Word and Spirit, will find it yet harder to endure the whirlwinds of his wrath, which will ſnatch from us thoſe ſecular advantages, for whoſe purſuit we have neglected* the better part, Luke 10. 42. *and leave us as little of worldly enjoyments, as we deſired to have of ſpiritual.*

temporal Calamities,

10. *Of this our late calamities have given us a ſad* præludium, *and God knows how ſoon we may ſee the laſt ſcene of the fatal tragedy, it being too probable that this is God's laſt experiment upon us, like the cauſticks and ſcarifyings to a lethargick patient; if this bring us not to ſenſe, we are like to ſleep on to deſtruction: And alas! what uncomfortable ſymptoms appear even in this point alſo! Who is there that (unleſs awakened by his perſonal concernments) ſeems at all to ſtartle at the noiſe of publick ruin? When God in diſpleaſure threatned the* Iſraelites, *that he would remit their conduct to his* Angel, *and not go himſelf with them, the text ſays,* They mourned, and no man put on his ornaments on him, *Exod.* 33. 4. *or as the* LXX. κατεπένθησαν ἐν πενθικοῖς, *and the Syriack,* ܠܐ ܣܡܘ ܓܒܪ ܙܝܢܗ ܥܠܘܗܝ, They ſtript themſelves of their armour, their ruffling garb of war, and appeared in the penitential dreſs of ſackcloth and aſhes: *But now we are given up not to a conducting, but deſtroying Angel, what ſigns of remorſe do we ſhew? What vanity (I fear I may ask what vice) have we ſubſtracted upon the ſenſe of God's anger? What nicety in clothes or diet have we cut off in ſympathy with the nakedneſs*

and Spiritual Security.

nakedness and hunger of our afflicted brethren? Nay, do not the unreasonable jollities of too many among us look as if we triumpht in their miseries, found musick in the discordant sounds of their groans, and our own laughter; and emulated that infamous barbarity of Nero, *who played while* Rome *burned? 'Tis mentioned by the Prophet as a most preposterous thing, a kind of impious solecism, to revel under the menace of judgments.* Thus saith the Lord, A sword, a sword, it is sharpned to make a sore slaughter, it is furbished, that it may glitter, *should we then make mirth?* Ezek. 21. 9, 10. *and certainly it less befits us against whom God has not only prepared, but used his sword; who are not only under the threats, but actual execution of his vengeance: And what is it but interpretatively to prompt him to yet sharper inflictions, by shewing him that these have not edge enough to penetrate us? With how much indignation God resents this perverse, this contumelious behaviour, we may read,* Isa. 22. 12, 13, 14. In that day did the Lord call to weeping, and mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth, and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; eating and drinking, for to morrow we shall die: *Upon which follows that severe denunciation:* Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die. *Of so deep a tincture is this guilt, that 'tis as lasting as our lives, and like the fretting* leprosie *in the house,* Levit. 14. 45. *can be removed by nothing but its dissolution.*

The Conclusion, an Admonition to Repentance.

11. *O then let us not add this to the heap of our other provocations, mistake impudence or desperation for courage; and franticly defie that Omnipotence which we are sure we cannot resist: But since it has pleased God even in wrath to remember mercy, let us transcribe his copy, be as kind to our selves as he has been to us, and stop in our career, as he has done in his; not so madly affect a full parallel with* Sodom *and* Gomorrah, *as to force him to destroy that remnant,* Isa. 1. 9. *which alone distinguishes our case: But rather take pattern from* Nineveh; *cry, and* cry mightily to God, *joyn humiliation to our prayers, and reformation to both, And could we be persuaded to do this with the same sincerity, and universality, we might hope it may be with the same success also: Would every one who has contributed to the accending, as industriously contribute to the appeasing of God's wrath: Would all who have brought their fire-brands, bring also their tears to quench them; as there would be no dry eyes in the nation at the present, so might it prevent as great a generality of weeping ones for the future; secure us such a tranquillity here, as may calmly convoy us to that impassible state,* where all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, *Rev.* 21. 4.

The TABLE of CONTENTS.

THE CAUSES OF THE Decay of Christian Piety.

CHAP. I:

The Character of Christian Religion, demonstrating its aptitude to plant exemplary Virtue and Sanctity.

1. THE holy Psalmist gives it as part of the Character of pious persons, and therewithal a description of their felicity, *Psal.* 92. 13. *That they shall bring forth more fruit in their age*: And what he thus observes of the members disjunctively and apart, reason suggests to be in a higher and more eminent manner appliable to the whole body united: And it being as well the mark as duty of every single Christian *to grow in grace*, 2 Pet. 3. 18. we may by all rules of proportion conclude, that the collective mass of such, the whole Church, is by this time near *attained to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, Eph. 4. 3. And indeed this is so regular an inference, that whilst the premisses stand firm, 'tis impossible to shake the conclusion, the entire body must necessarily augment answerably to the growth of its several parts. And if we should so far let loose to speculation, as to forget our experience, if we measure the effect only by the power and energy of the cause, we should surely be as far from doubting the premisses also. Christianity is in it self of so prolifick a nature, so apt to impregnate the hearts and lives of its proselytes, that it is hard to imagine, that any branch should want a due fertility, that is engrafted into so vigorous a stock.

Christian Piety ought to improve in proportion to the time of its growth.

2. For first, in its spring and original it is most supernatural and divine, derived immediately from him, who had nothing more of man, than he purposely assumed to draw us the nearer to him as God. He it was that disseminated this doctrine, and that in order to the *purifying to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*; and certainly his choice abundantly justifies its propriety to that end, and his descent from Heaven on that errand puts so venerable a solemnity upon it, that though his descent were very astonishing, yet it will be much more so, that it should fail of the designed effect.

Advantaged by its divine Originals.

3. And indeed did our faith give us no clue to lead us to the Author, yet its composition would speak it to be of no humane extraction, its Precepts are so excellent and refined, so agreeable to the more spiritual part of our temper, and so apt, as to forestal, so to cleanse and sublimate the more gross and corrupt, as shews flesh and blood never revealed it. Nay, further, so effectually providing for all those advantages to mankind, which the wisest of mens laws have in vain attempted, that methinks they all stand before it like the *magicians* before *Moses*, and by their impotence tacitly confess it to be the finger of God. 'Twere too large a theme to confront them in the several instances, let it suffice to observe one, which has a common influence on all; and that is the immaculate *cleanness* of heart, which Christ's, and only Christ's law requires. This is the only proper *basis*, on which to superstruct, first *innocency*, and then *virtue*, and without this the most rigid exactors of outward purity do but transcribe the folly of him, who pumps very laboriously in a ship, yet neglects to stop the leak: Or the worse tyranny of *Pharaoh*, in *requiring brick without straw*: So far is it from a severity in our Law-giver, thus to limit and restrain our thoughts, that it is an act of the greatest indulgence: By no means the laying on a new burden, but the furnishing us with an engine to bear with ease that weight, which otherwise the stoutest

By its excellent Precepts.

Atlas must sink under. And were but this one precept sincerely conformed to, it would not only facilitate, but ascertain the obedience to all the rest. If the *first sparks* of ill were quencht within, what possibility is there they should ever break out into a flame? How shall he kill that dares not be angry? be *adulterous* in act, that did not first transgress in his desire? How shall he be *perjured*, that fears an oath? or *defraud*, that permits not himself to covet? In the like manner all *positive acts* of virtue are but the natural effects of the interior habit. Where the love of God is seated in the heart, 'twill operate in all the faculties, keep them in a busie endeavour of doing acceptable service: When *fear* is planted there, it will break forth into outward reverence and duty, and so proportionable 'twill be in every other instance. 'Tis therefore an advice well becoming the wisdom of *Solomon*, Prov. 4. *To keep the heart with all diligence:* But then it is withal the work of him who is greater than *Solomon*, to teach us how to do this: For *unless he keep that city, the watchman waketh but in vain.* If he instruct not to secure those issues of life, they will betray and ruin, appear indeed *the savour of death unto death.* Now of this divine art of *tacticks* and defence, Christianity is the only school, and therefore most fitly qualified for the producing all those supernatural excellencies, to which the timely prepossession of the heart is the rudiment and principle.

By its Promises. 4. And as the *preceptive* part enjoyns the most exact and elevated virtue, so it is most advantageously enforc'd by the *promissory*, which both in respect of the kind and value of the rewards, and also the manner of proposing them, is most exquisitely adapted to the same end.

Promises not temporary and carnal, but spiritual. 5. For first, If we consider the nature of the things promised, we shall find they are not gross and *carnal*, such as may court and gratifie the bestial part of us; but such as are proportioned to the supreme and leading principle, as feast a *soul*, and suit with the capacities of an *intelligence*. All the beatitudes the Gospel tenders to its votaries, either relate to the *purity* or peace of the mind in this life, or else to its completer *felicity* hereafter. And though 'tis true, the body is not wholly unconsidered, though the addition of all temporal necessaries be promised, yet even those are for the soul's sake, either to secure it from the sin of solicitude and distrust, or to preserve it a useful instrument for the other's service. And as for the future glory in which the body is to partake, 'tis to be observed, that flesh and blood cannot inherit it; that load of earth which now engages to corruption must be put off, must be calcin'd and spiritualiz'd; and thus made glorious, be clothed upon with glory. So that in all the Gospel dispensation there is no *provision for the flesh*, its lusts and sensualities. And then sure there cannot be a more unanswerable argument against our providing for it, than to see it left out of God's care. Indeed had we proposals of a *Mahumetan* paradise, were we to expect our bliss only in the satiating our appetites, it might be reasonable here to whet them before-hand, to stretch them to the utmost wideness, or in the Prophet's phrase, *to enlarge our desires as Hell*, and by frequent antepasts excite our gust for that profuse perpetual meal: Or, were we only to have our portion in this life, to enjoy an uninterrupted affluence of outward comforts, 'twere but good husbandry to improve them to the height, and the Wise man's advice would then cease to be irony, *Eccl.* 12. 9. *Rejoyce, O young man, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine eyes.* Had we only the prospect of a *Canaan*, such an eternal inheritance as a conquering sword could give, as the salvation of a *Joshua*, and the affluence of milk and honey could produce; 'twould be no wonder if we never voluntarily endured the thirst and famine of the wilderness, but be always, as they, desiring meat for our lust, projecting the gratifying those desires, in whose repletion we placed our happiness. But when our religion makes us no such tender, when all its hopes are of another make, invite to those diviner joys of which sensuality has no capacity or taste,. what pretence can we have to cherish that *here*, which we must wholly be divested of *hereafter?* Those immaterial felicities we expect, do naturally suggest to us the necessity of preparing our appetites and hungers for them, without which Heaven can be no Heaven to us: For since the pleasure of any thing results from the agreement between it and the desire, what satisfaction can *spiritual* enjoyments give unto a *carnal* mind? Alas! what delight would it be to the swine to be wrapt in fine linen, and laid in odours? his senses are not gratifyed by any such delicacies, nor would he feel any thing besides the torment of being withheld from the mire. And as little complacency would a brutish soul find in those purer and refined pleasures, which can only upbraid, not satisfy him. So that could we by an impossible supposition fancy such a one assumed to those fruitions, his pleasure sure would be as little as his preparation for it was. Those *eyes* which have continually beheld vanity,

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would be dazled, not delighted with the *beatifick vision;* neither could that *tongue*, which has accustomed it self only to oaths and blasphemies, find harmony or musick in a *Hallelujah.* 'Tis the peculiar privilege of the pure in heart, *that they shall see God;* and if any others could so invade this their inclosure, as to take Heaven by violence, it surely would be a very joyless possession to these men, and only place them in a condition to which they have the greatest aversation and antipathy. So that holiness here is not only necessary to the acquiring, but the enjoyment of bliss hereafter: And therefore unless men will contrive to annihilate their joys, and affect the monstrous riddle of being tormented in Heaven, they cannot but from this spirituality of the Promises infer a necessity of purifying themselves, and being capable at least of innocent celestial joys; and since that only can be done by virtuous practice here on earth, the obligation thereto must needs be very pressing and indispensable. And as the *nature* of the Promises directs to this, so does the great transcendent *value* encourage and animate. *Hope* is the grand exciter of industry, and as the object of hope is more or less *desirable*, so is the endeavour more *intense* or *remiss;* and upon this ground we must conclude the Christian has all reason to be the most indefatigable, seeing his expectations are the noblest and most encouraging. That they are so, we cannot but acknowledge, if we admit of the description which the *Spirit* gives: That *Spirit*, which, as he seals us to it, so is himself the earnest of that inheritance. He in the Sacred *Scriptures* has drawn up a map of the country which we are to enter: And sure we may say of it as *Caleb* and *Joshua* did of *Canaan*, Numb. 14. 7. *The land is an exceeding good land.* For first, if we consider the negative advantages it has, we shall find there is an absence of all the ills, destructive or affrightful unto humane nature. *There shall be no more death*, *nor sorrow*, *nor crying*, *nor pain*, Revel. 21. 4. Here alas! we are infested by all these. *Sorrow* and *pain* prey and insult on all the comforts of our lives; leave us not a gourd, which is not like that of *Jonah*, smitten with these worms: And then comes death the grand devourer, and spares not *life* it self. Nay, those little *respites* which we have from these are so imbitter'd by unpleasant expectations and presages, that we are sad before we are *afflicted;* in *pain* without a *disease*, and in *death* in the midst of *life:* And then a state exempted, not only from the calamities, but the fears of these, may well deserve to be lookt upon with appetite.

6. But Heaven is designed for our reward, as well as rescue, and therefore is *adumbrated* by all those *positive excellencies* which can endear or recommend. It is a *crown*, and that not of *thorns*, such as our *Saviour*'s was, and such as the more affected *diadems* of the world oft prove unto the wearer; *but one of glory:* Nor is that *crown*, nor that *glory* like our sublunary *splendors*, which suddenly vanish, and leave the possessors to the greater obscurity and contempt; but 'tis *permanent*, such *as fades not away*, 1 Pet. 5. 4. or in St. *Paul*'s phrase, *an eternal weight of glory.* But to give you its more comprehensive character, *'tis a being with the Lord*, 1 Thess. 4. 17. Nay, 'tis a possessing even God himself. *He shall be their God*, Rev. 22. 3. and what can he want, who possesses him who is all things? How can he fail of the most ravishing delight, that stands before him, *in whose presence is the fulness of joy*, and *at whose right hand are pleasures*, and those not short or transient, *but for evermore?* So indefeasible is our estate in those joys, that if we do not like mad prodigals sell it in reversion, we shall when we are once invested, be beyond the possibility of ill husbandry; not have it in our power to undo our selves. Now surely these are great and precious *promises*, such as may well sustain the weight of that inference the *Apostle* builds upon them; and engage us to *cleanse* our selves from all *filthiness* both of *flesh* and *spirit*, and *to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. 7. 1. for they address to that *principle* which is confessedly predominant in our *nature;* so that if the love of *Christ* cannot, yet the love of our *selves* may constrain us. How must it then affront and baffle the enticements of sin, when we compare its empty vanishing *pleasures* with those solid and durable *joys?* What a forestalling will it be of Satan's markets, that God bids so much fairer for us; offers us that to which his Ταῦτα πάντα σοι δώσω, *all this will I give* (could he make such a wholesale) can bear no proportion: And how then shall we ever barter it away for those little petty commodities he retails to us; or make any other reply to his proffers, than a *get thee behind me, Satan?* For alas! can we remember that we are *candidates* for a kingdom, and yet retain the abject spirits of *slaves?* Do we expect to reign hereafter, and yet depose our selves before-hand here? suffer every the vilest lust to rule over us? Is so glorious a prize annext to the victory, and will it not animate the faintest heart and feeblest hands to the combat? What lions can we fear in the way, which this hope is not *Samson* enough to encounter? How *light* are our heaviest, how *momentary* our most lasting afflictions, if balanced with that

Heavenly, glorious, eternal.

eternal

eternal weight of glory? Are we spoiled of our goods? here is a reserve of treasure, which no *thief*, neither the slye, nor the avowed, the pilferer, nor the sequestrator can vindicate. Are we reduced to our *Saviour*'s destitution, not to have *where to lay our head*? *Yet we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens.* Are we reproacht for the name of *Christ?* that *ignominy* serves but to advance our future *glory*, every such *libel* here becomes *panegyrick* there. Nay, are we persecuted to death? that sends us but to take possession of the crown of life. Upon such sure grounds does our Christianity set us. While we make good its condition, it pulls out the sting of all that is most deadly: And in a more comprehensive sense possesses us of the privilege promised the *Disciples*, *that nothing should by any means hurt them*, Mark 16. The most adverse chances being but like the plowing and breaking the ground, in order to a more plentiful harvest. And yet we are not so wholly turned off to that reversion, as to have no supplies for the present; for besides the comfort of so great and certain an expectation in another *life*, we have promises also for *this*. Even of all those internal and spiritual satisfactions, which attend the *practice of piety*. The feast of a good conscience is the true *Christian*'s daily diet, and sure whatever the rich men of the world think, he only can be said to fare deliciously: Nay, he has yet more *supernatural* food, *Manna* rain'd down immediately from Heaven: The *Holy Spirit* sent on purpose to refresh and support him: Those joys which differ rather in degree than kind from those which are to be his final portion. And that the *soul* may not be too much incommoded in her house of clay, there is provision made for that also, such necessaries secured to the body, as may keep it in *tenantable* repair: We have *Christ*'s express promise for it, that *to those that seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things shall be added:* If not that superfluity which may oppress and load (render the *body* rather the tomb than mansion of the *soul*) yet such as may sustain and support us; and sure 'tis easy to decide which is the happier lot. In short, we are sure enough to defray the charge of that voyage, which lands us at *eternal bliss*: And certainly he must be of a very sluggish or querulous humour, that shall demur upon setting out, or demand higher encouragements.

Propos'd with Evidence and Plainness. 7. And as the *nature* and *value* of the *promises* render them most proper engagements and incentives to all *virtue*; so if we consider the *manner* of proposing, we shall find them in that respect also highly contributive to the same end. For first, They are clear and express, not wrapt up in dark *enigmatical* insinuations, wherein men must exercise their *sagacity* as well as their faith: But revealed with that plainness, that 'tis impossible for any who knows but the letter of the Gospel, to be ignorant of the eternal reward it proposes. And herein the difference belongs to *Christianity* above all other *religions*, some whereof have left men so much in the dark, that many sects among them have denied the immortality of the *soul*; and sure they were but faint encouragements they could propose unto that *virtue* which was to perish with them. What should animate them to the rugged severe tastes of restraining appetites, subduing passions, eradicating habits, who discerned no rewards for blameless *souls?* 'Tis true indeed, *virtue* is in her self perfectly amiable, though she brought no dowry, but experience shews us she has not many *Platonick* lovers: And when so few are ambitious to wed her, when she brings an eternal inheritance with her, we may easily guess how little she will be sought without it. When men once conclude that their *Spirits* shall vanish into the soft air, the inference is very obvious, *Come on, let us use the creatures as in youth*; as we find it elegantly pursued, *Wisd.* 2. But of those who acknowledge a future being, their perceptions were very misty and obscure. The Heathens had such confus'd notions of their *Elysium*, that the epithet of *shades* belong'd more properly to the darkness than the refreshment, and was a reward fit for the votaries of those ambiguous *oracles* they consulted. And proportionably to the obscurity of their hopes were the exercises of their *virtue*; their *piety* was even overwhelm'd and confounded by the multitude of their *deities*; nay, which is yet stranger, their *Gods* themselves seem to have been lost in their own croud, else sure the *Athenians* would never have inscrib'd an altar to the *unknown God:* And indeed their offices were generally such, as if they had been devoted to no other, they having as little discerning of their worship as of their *God*: 'Twas wrapt up in clouds and darkness, had mysterious recesses, to which the common worshipper had no admittance; such as were to require a veneration only by not being understood: And though this must needs deprive their services of that spirit and quickness, which constitutes the *virtue* of devotion, yet alas! their religion had more than that negative contrariety to *virtue*. Many of their worships being nothing but a solemnity of the foulest *vices*; and their *divinity* taught them to violate *morality*. A deceit *Satan* could not probably so long have triumph'd in, had they had the Gospel notion of Heaven;

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for sure they could not have suppos'd their *Gods* of such mutable inclinations, as to affect *purity* in their cohabitants, and *pollution* in their votaries: or such incongruous dispensers of rewards, as to apportion an impeccable state hereafter, to the most flagitious criminals on earth.

8. As to the *Jews* 'tis true, they derived their light from a clearer Fountain, were under the *Oeconomy* of immediate revelation, and therefore might be suppos'd to have had a freer prospect into that Heaven, from whence their *law* descended; yet even they were in this, as in many other particulars, under *Moses* his veil, had rather dark *adumbrations*, and those too overwhelmed with the multitude of express temporal promises. The earthly *Canaan* lay so fair and open to their prospect, as easily intercepted their view of the *heavenly*; and their *faith* must remove, at least overlook that *mountain*, before it could come to any sight of the *Horizon* and extended *Sky*. Nay, when 'tis remembred, that the *Sadducees*, a great and learned part of their Doctors, denied all future Being, we must think the intimations of it were very obscure; it being scarce imaginable, that any considering men should think the *souls* expir'd with the *body* upon any other ground, but that they knew not what after state to assign it. So that though they wanted not *figures* and *shadows*, or, as the Apostle calls them, *patterns of heavenly things*, *Heb.* 9. 23. yet they seem'd not to have been well understood, and the generality of men were not only in their persons, but their understandings denied entrance into the *holy of holies*; penetrated not that mystical representation, which was within the veil: And answerable to this dimness of their perceptions was the whole *system* and *body* of their *Religion*, which rather entertain'd it self in those *external bodily* performances, which affected the *sense*, than in those *divine* and *spiritual* raptures, which purified and elevated the *soul*. 'Tis the *Apostle*'s affirmation, *Heb.* 9. 9. *That the sacrifices there offered could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience*, and he gives the reason in subjoyning, that they stood only in *meats* and *drinks*, and *carnal ordinances*. Alas, what propriety had all their legal purifications towards the cleansing of the mind? That might be in the *mire*, while the body was in the *laver*; and while the surface of the man was sprinkled with blood, the heart might be more bestial than those creatures who lent the *ablution*. And indeed, if we consider their morality, we shall find that outside formal ceremony had proceeded to infect and poison that also. The outward restraint, the bare forbearance of an actual commission, being by them thought a full compliance with all the negative precepts: So that we see *Christ* is fain to assert the internal part of the obligation, and extend the duty to the thoughts and inclinations. Besides, those acts of *virtue* they perform'd were commonly such as had an aspect, rather on their temporal well-being, than distant and unseen rewards; their justice, and charity confin'd to their own *nation*, directed to the flourishing of their own *common-wealth*: Whereas *aliens* were devoted to their rapine and despight; so that if they were *virtues*, they were rather *political* than *moral*, and indeed while they placed so much of their hopes on *earth*, look'd on *secular* plenty and tranquillity as their reward, 'twas but consonant they should square their endeavours by that measure, and consider things not simply in their native properties of good or ill, but according to their tendency towards that they esteem'd their *felicity*.

Not as to the Jews, in Types, and outward Ceremonies.

9. But God has provided, as the *Apostle* says, *Heb.* 11. 40. *better things for us*, has not only made a better covenant with us, but has *establisht it upon better promises*, chap. 8. 6. given us clearer revelations, not only of our *duty*, but our *recompence*; the veil in *Christ* is done away, and we all with open face *Behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord*, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. The Gospel puts the evidences of our inheritance into our own hands, seal'd by his explicit and direct promise, who cannot lye; and that not only engag'd by way of *munificence*, but bargain and contract, as the purchase of that *price*, which our *Redeemer* fully paid in our behalf. And sure this is in the *Apostle*'s phrase *strong consolation*; and if so, it must be forcible enticement likewise, he cannot but run alacriously, who has the prize in his eye, nor can St. *Paul* use a more pressing argument to his *Corinthians*, *to be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, than this assurance, *That their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 58.

Promises better in their nature, and in the terms of Assurance.

10. And as this clear proposal of the *promises* is most proper to encourage and inspirit our endeavours, so is the conditionality most efficacious to necessitate and engage them. Had *Heaven* been only promis'd as a largess, and with a blind promiscuous bounty dispens'd without discrimination, how much it might have rais'd our *gratitude*, I know not, but sure it would not have excited our *industry*, which in all instances we find is whetted by interest: and where that is otherwise secur'd, men generally esti-

Are conditional, and thereby engages to Holiness.

mate it a part of the benefit that their labour is superseded; and please themselves no less in a lazy bequest, than a full enjoyment. So that indeed it is this circumstance of the *promises*, that must give life to all the rest, and make them operative toward the producing of *good life*; for admit the *joys* we expect never so *divine* and *spiritual* for their kind, never so great and transcendent for degree, and these also represented to us in the most clear and convincing manner; yet if they be tendered not as objects of our choice, but the certainty of our fate *felicities*, which we are only concerned to enjoy, but not to acquire, they may make us glad, but surely not diligent; it being but a cold inducement to any undertaking, to be assured, 'tis perfectly needless: We have therefore all reason to confess it our greatest advantage towards *virtue*, that God has so linkt our *hopes* and our *duty* together. And indeed, when we consider the great disproportion between the one and the other; the infinity of the *reward*, with the despicableness of the *service*: We must resolve that he had no other design in making his *promises* conditional, than to engage us by our interest to that *holiness*, to which he saw our inclinations did not bind us: That it was an artifice of his *love* to ensnare us into two *felicities*, by proposing of one, enforce us to take one good in the way to another, *virtue* in passage to *glory*.

Are also enforc'd by menaces of punishment.

11. And indeed, who would not think this method so invincibly efficacious, as might supersede the necessity of any other? but God who understands our thoughts long before, *Psal.* 139. 1. foresaw that notwithstanding this proposal of a *Canaan*, there would be *Reubenites* and *Gadites*, who would set up their rest on this side of *Jordan*; so intent on the commodity of their cattle, as to be content themselves to be part of the herd, and *become like the beasts that perish*: That there would be men of so ignoble, disingenuous tempers, as none of these cords of a man would be able to draw: And therefore there is another part of the *Gospel-Oeconomy* fitted to their capacities; the *threats* and *interminations*, those terrors of the *Lord*, which as goads may drive those brutish creatures, who will not be attracted: That those who think themselves perfectly unconcern'd in *David*'s question, *Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord*, *Psal.* 24. 3. may yet startle at *Esay*'s, *Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?* Of so formidable a kind are those menaces, as is sufficient to awake the most drowsie stupid *soul*, and are most apt to operate upon that part of their temper, which evacuated the gentler method: That very sensuality, which made them despise *Heaven*, may help to enhanse the dread of *Hell*; the lack of a *drop of water* will be most insupportable to him, who fared deliciously every day; those *flames* will be yet more scorching to those bodies, who by studious effeminacies and softness have superadded an artificial tenderness to the natural; nor will the *gnawing of the worm* appear more intolerable to any, than those who here make it their business to tye up its *jaws*, gag or stupifie that *conscience* which would now admonish, but will there torment. And when to this is added the *perpetuity* of these *pains*, that *the worm shall never die*, *the fire never be quench'd*; certainly this puts such an edge upon the terror, as may well make it in the *Apostle*'s phrase, *quick* and *powerful*, *searching even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit*, *the joints and marrow*, when we are assur'd, *That the ax is thus laid unto the root of the tree*, *and that every tree that brings not forth good fruit*, *must be hewn down and cast into the fire*, we shall sure be warn'd *to bring forth meet fruits of repentance*, *and fly from the wrath to come*.

Are assisted by Supernatural aids in the performance of Duty.

12. But, because neither invitations nor threats can avail with those who are any way invincibly impeded to apply them to their benefit: Since the most *glorious prize*, the most formidable danger is insignificant to him, who wants power to run unto the one, or from the other; it has pleased God to inspirit and actuate all his *evangelical* methods, by a concurrence of *supernatural* strength, makes it not only eligible, but possible, I may say easie and pleasant for us to do whatever he commands us: And notwithstanding our natural debility, makes us through *Christ* which strengthens us, *able to do all things*: By his Spirit he prevents, assists, restrains, excites, comforts, convinces, gives grace, and adds to that the happier largess of a will to use it, and knowledge to discern the want of more: Infusing to the *soul* an ardent thirst of greater powers, and readier means of service, which the performance actuates to greater strengths, and yet enflames to new desires, and more importunate pursuits, whilst God at once bestows and crowns his own donations; still giving unto him that has, till that at last he give himself, and *grace is swallowed up in glory*. And to assure us of this aid, he has been pleased to oblige himself; descends to the solemnity of a *pact* and *covenant*; has indented with us, and constituted it a principal part of the new and everlasting *covenant made with mankind in the blood of the Son of God*, *to send the Comforter*, *his Holy Spirit*, *to be with us till the end of the world*, and do all this. So that the Gospel is at once the

assigner

assigner of our tasks, and the *magazine* of our strength; so much spirit goes along with that Letter; so much internal grace is annexed to its outward administration, as will to all, who do not resist it, infallibly render it *the power of God to salvation*. For 'tis not the sole privilege of a St. *Paul*, but the common portion of all *Christians*, *That God's grace shall be sufficient for them*; which is sure a more Gospel-like promise, than that it should be too strong for them: so violent and irresistible, as to commit a rape upon their *spirits*; such a mighty wind, as drives them headlong upon *duty*. Indeed this competency is of all other proportions the most *incentive* to industry; we see in *temporals*, too little makes men desperate, and too much careless, and certainly 'twould be the same in *spirituals*: but now when we have stock enough to set up with, and that too of so improvable a nature, that is capable of infinite advancement, and yet on the other side no less capable of total decay also, it being given with this express condition, that upon neglect it shall be withdrawn: So that our own sloth may make us *poor*, but nothing else can keep us from being abundantly *rich*: What can be imagin'd more animating to diligence and endeavour? And this being the condition wherein our *Christianity* has placed us, added to the former considerations, will beyond exception or *subterfuge*, evince its perfect aptitude and fitness for the end to which it was aim'd, *the planting and nourishing all true virtue among men*, the introducing the Tree of Life into the world again, and so forming us a *Paradise*, even amidst the briers and thorns of our exil'd state.

CHAP. II.

The Character of Christian-mens Practice, shewing their multiplied failance, both from the rule of that holy profession, and its genuine effect.

AND now who can suspect, that a *cause* so rightly dispos'd should miss of its *effect*? That this so *auspicious Planet* should be counter influenc'd by any *malevolent Star*? Or that, what has so many tenures in us, should be finally disseis'd? For, admit we have not the piety to be prevail'd upon by the reverence of the *Author*, yet the excellency of its *composition* does so much recommend it to our Reason, that we must put off the best part of our *Nature* to evacuate the force of our Religion: Nay, supposing us to have done that too, to have struck our selves out of the list of *Rationals*, yet if we keep but the rank of *Animals*, if we have not extinguisht passion and sense, it descends even to them; addresses to our hopes and fears with most importunate solicitations, and convincing motives: So that unless we have the absurd ill luck to have much of the *Stoick*, and nothing of the *Philosopher*, 'twill be impossible to resist its impressions; and sure he that contemplates this, will be apt with some confidence to conclude *Christendom* to be the *Goshen* of the world, not only in respect of its *light*, but of its *immunity* from all those *locusts* and *Caterpillers*, those swarms of mean and sordid vices, which both cover and devour the rest of the earth.

Difficult to resist the force of Christianity.

2. But this must be the inference of a mere *contemplative*, a recluse that converses only with his own meditations: For let him be so much *secular*, as once to look abroad, the most transient glance will serve to unravel all his hopeful *speculation*, and shew him that *Christendom* may be as much heathen as *America*: Whereas 'tis usually said, that ill *manners* produce good *laws*, we have reverst the *Aphorism*, and our good *law* has introduc'd the most corrupt *manners*. Our holy *faith*, which like a foundation should support good works, has like a gulf swallowed them up. And so universal a depravation is there among us, that we have scarce any thing left to distinguish us from the most barbarous people, but a better name and worse vices.

Degeneracy of Christians.

3. And here, what terms of wonder or of grief can be significant enough to express, or to bewail so strange and so perverse degeneration, that the *light* of the *world* should thus darken it; the *salt* of the *earth* be the means of putrifying and corrupting it? That those, who were by God drawn out from the *heathen* world, should so outvy the *Gentiles* crimes, as if they had forsaken them, only because they were too innocent? This indeed is one of *Satan's* subtilest stratagems, to fill Christ's camp thus with his soldiers, by whose intestine treacheries, he has been more triumphant, than by all his open assaults and avowed hostilities. What a late *statesman* said (prophetically, if we may judge by the event) of *England*, that *it was a vivacious animal that could never*

Their lives contrary to their profession.

 die,

die, except it kill'd it self; is no less true of the *Church*, which has always been invulnerable against all darts, but what have been taken out of its own quiver. Of this the primitive times were pregnant testimonies, where all the most witty cruelties, the most bloody persecutions, never made any breach in her: But she stood firmer for all those batteries, and like an arch'd building, became more strong and compact, by that weight, which was design'd to crush her: But, the *vice* of *professors* undermines her very foundation, and does as much exceed the *destructiveness* of the most hostile assaults, as intestine *treachery* is more ruinous and fatal, than foreign *violence*.

Admirable lives of Primitive Christians.

4. As long as the lives of Christians were the *transcripts* of their doctrine, they rendred it venerable to all, and gave a presumption, there was something more than *humane* in it, that could work such signal *effects*, that could so transform *men*, as to make the *adulterer* chaste, the *drunkard* temperate, the *covetous* liberal, the *contentious* peaceable. *This*, this was the way to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*, as the Apostle speaks, *Tit.* 2. 10. And then the rule of *contraries* directs us to conclude very distant *effects* from our now so distant *practices*, that our very *religion* should partake of the *infamy* of our lives, and be thought rather a *mystery* of *iniquity*, than *godliness*.

Religion suffers for the wickedness of its professors,

5. Thus is *Christ* wounded in the house of his friends, and has more reproach cast on him by those that profess his name, than by the loudest blasphemies of those that oppose it. For when those, who have not opportunity to examine our *faith*, see the enormousness of our *works*, what should hinder them from measuring the *Master* by the *Disciples?* It being scarce imaginable, that any one *sect* of men should so universally run counter to all the rules of their profession: For let any sober *Heathen* look upon *Christendom*, as it is at *this day* weltring in the blood, not of *Martyrdom*, but *War*, and will it be possible for him to think it owns a Gospel of Peace; or that those who so perpetually do those outrages, they are unwilling to suffer, profess obedience to the *royal law* of *Love thy neighbour as thy self*, Jam. 2. 8? Can he see the violence and oppressions, the frauds and underminings, the busie scramblings for little parcels of earth; and yet believe we count our selves strangers and pilgrims in it, and have laid up our treasure in Heaven? Can he observe the strange and almost universal distortion of speech, whereby it has lost its native property of being interpreter of the mind, and under intelligible words so far exhibits the *Babel* confusion, that no man understands another's meaning; and can he imagine we have any such Precepts, as *Lye not one to another*, or any such penalty upon the infringer, as *exclusion from the new Jerusalem?* Shall we hear our God mention'd more frequently and earnestly in our imprecations, than our Prayers, and every part of our crucified Saviour re-crucified in our horrid oaths; and shall he not think, that his second executioners bear him as little reverence as his first; or that he has given no such command, as *Swear not at all?* When he discerns self-preservation bow'd to as the supreme law, can he ever dream of another so inconsistent obligation, as that of *taking up the Cross?* Or that *suffering for righteousness sake* is one of our greatest felicities, when he sees us run so affrighted from it, that no crime, perjury, rebellion, murder, is block enough in our way to stop our flight? In *fine*, when he considers how much of our business it is, first to excite, and then to cloy the flesh, to spur it on to riots, even beyond its own propensions, that the whole year is but one mad carnival, and we are *voluptuous*, not so much upon *desire* or *appetite*, as by way of *exploit* and *bravery*: When I say he considers this, can he possibly guess our *institution* directs us to beat down the body, to *mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts*, interdicts us all *rioting and drunkenness*, *chambring and wantonness*, and *all provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof?* Certainly all rules of discourse, will direct him to the quite contrary conclusion. And when he sees a set of men, that have enhans'd the common humane pravity, he will be apt to infer their principles have taught them the improvement: And upon that supposal, he wanted not temptation to his option that said, *Let my soul be with the Philosophers.*

and is contemn'd thereby;

6. And while we thus misrepresent our holy profession to *others*, it will be no wonder, if we finally do it to *our selves*, that we forget its *native shape*, and look on her only in the *ugly dress* our selves have put on, and that effect seems already too visible among us: Our lives have so long confuted it, that we triumph over it as a baffled thing; and like *Amnon*, loath it because we have ravish'd and defil'd it. Many of us take notice of the better morals of *Turks* and *Infidels*, not in reproach of our selves, but our Religion, and because we have so many *Lepers*, think *Abanah* and *Pharphar*, better than all the waters of *Israel*; this is openly in the mouths of many, but is so podigiously irrational, as well as unjust, that one can scarce think it possible to be in their *hearts*, unless they be pursued by the fate of habitual lyars, that at last come to perswade themselves.

7. Cer-

7. Certainly there is no other parallel instance, wherein men conclude so perversely: He that shews a man that precipice, upon whose brink he stands, that intreats, yea, importunes him to retire from the *danger*, nay, bribes him with the greatest rewards to choose *safety*, has done all that can be expected from a friend, or charitable man: And if after all, the wretched person so advis'd shall cast himself headlong upon ruin, assuredly no inquest would return his murder in any other form, than that of *Felo de se*. And why then should our Christianity be accus'd of these ills, which it would infallibly avert, if our obstinacy would permit it? Indeed the charge is so wild, that it seems rather design'd as an artifice of diversion, a sprout of that first fig-tree, which was to hide the nakedness of lapsed *Adam*. Men think it policy to transfer their guilts, and are willing the *violence* of their lusts should pass for the impotence of their Religion. Like irregular patients, blaming their physician for those ill accidents, which they know owing only to their own unruliness. A pregnant testimony of the reproachful nature of sin, that men are content to betake themselves to the most forlorn shifts, to avoid the owning it? But the consciousness is so pressing and intolerable, that with many it drives on to yet higher outrages. 'Tis not enough for men to decry their *Christianity* as a feeble insignificant thing, but they load it even with contradictory imputations, and that which sometimes they call *the foolishness of preaching*, to bring it in scorn and contempt; shall at another be stiled an *art* and *trick* to bring it into suspicion and hatred, be arraign'd for imposture and deceit, a project of imposing upon credulous souls, and gaining real advantages to the managers, while they feed the silly *Proselyte* with imaginary ones. How groundless a calumny this is, as it appears from the sanctity and eminent simplicity of Christian Religion, which above all things excludes fraud and falshood; so also from the designments and aims of its first promulgators, who as they cannot be suppos'd dextrous enough to lay such a scene of taking pageantry; so all their visible acquists were scourgings and imprisonments, persecutions and death. If this were the case, it would indeed go near to reconcile the before-mentioned contradictory imputations, whilst the imposing upon credulous souls at this dear rate, would be in very deed *the foolishness of preaching*, the greatest madness in the world. Men of common reason would be asham'd to use such frivolous cavils: But who can without horror hear them from profest Christians? That while *Infidels* are modest in their reproaches, look upon our Doctrine only as erroneous, *Disciples* should be bitter, and charge it as insidious and treacherous? Thus does the *Church* experiment the truth of her blessed *Lord's predictions*, and finds her *foes are those of her own house*: And though she be Christ's *Dove*, yet is subjected to the fate of the *viper*, and has her bowels torn out by those that spring from them.

ought not to be charg'd with their guilt.

8. These are the growing consequences of *resolute impiety*, he who will not be kept within the bounds of duty, seldom contents himself with that bare violation: He not only *breaks the bonds in sunder*, but *casts them* away too; is impatient they should keep a reputation to upbraid him, when he has robb'd them of the power of restraining him: And this sure is the bottom of all that deep reasoning, by which men have learnt to argue themselves and others out of their *Creed*: And though this be indeed the great *arcanum*, the *Philosopher's stone* they aim at, yet they have met with another good experiment by the way; and have, by I know not what *Chymistry*, extracted a reputation out of these most unapt *materials*. He passes for a considering man, that disputes principles, and is thought most to own his *reason*, that least owns his *faith*: And then 'twill be no wonder if this success animate, and give them not only confidence, but vanity to avow what is thus creditable.

Principles of Religion now call'd in question,

9. Indeed Satan is too subtil a manager to lose this advantage, and the event sadly shews, he has not neglected to improve it, as appears not only by the number of such pretenders unto reason, but even by their advancing to higher degrees. The *voluptuary*, who likes his portion in this world, and fears that in another, is at first only prompted by his interest to quarrel with the *last article* of the *Creed*, and so in his own defence denies the *life everlasting*. But when he finds his necessity made a virtue, and himself struck into the repute of a wit; upon that account he doubts not, his fame will increase with his irreligion, and so proceeds still to unravel farther, till at last he leaves not so much as *I believe in God*. That many have advanc'd so far is too evident, and by some so own'd, that they will not thank his charity, that shall hope better of them.

and disbeliev'd by many.

10. 'Twas once the triumph of infant Christianity, that it silenc'd all the *Heathen Oracles*, and within a while demolish'd even the *Synagogue* too: But alas, its mature age gives us that effect in a most inverted sense, it now has serv'd to suppress even the common notions of a *Deity*, turn'd out the *One* as well as the *many* gods, and instead

Atheism gets ground of Religion.

of *Polytheists* and *Idolaters*, has made *Atheists*, and that which Christ tells us was design'd *to perfect and fill up the Law*, has by the strange pravity of its professors at once obliterated both *Law* and *Law-giver* out of mens minds, thereby exemplifying the old axiom, *Corruptio optimi est pessima*; and the *Saint* as well as the *Angel*, if he desert his innocence, commences Fiend and *Devil*. These are such sad, such direful transmutations, as excite not so much wonder, as grief and lamentation; and what rivers, what oceans of tears are competent to bewail such unutterable evils?

Removal of the Gospel to be fear'd thereupon.

11. The removal of the *candlestick* is so formidable a *judgment*, that the threatning of it is us'd by Christ as the most awakening menace to the Seven Churches, *Rev.* 2. 3. but the removing it by our own hands is yet an enhansement of that highest calamity; when men are come to such an insensate obduration, that they court their *plagues*, become their own *Lictors*, and make that their *choice*, which is their extremest *punishment*, they are certainly too secure of that ruin they call for: And may we not fear it may prove *general*, and involve us all? that while so *many* cry out to be deliver'd from their Christianity, as their load and pressure, and so few express their dissent to that demand, God may in judgment grant it, hearken to those that cry loudest, rescue his Gospel from our profane and impious violations, and give it to others that may bring forth the fruits of it?

Our Hypocrisie may hasten it.

12. Nor is this to be fear'd only from the explicit importunities of the blasphemous, for it is interpretatively the vote of many others; who ever give themselves up to the dominion of any lust, do implicitly renounce their obedience to Christ, and say, *We will not have this man to rule over us.* And when he is thus depos'd from his regal and directive power, we have reason to believe he will despise a mere titular soveraignty, not suffer the scepter of his Word to remain as an empty ceremony among those who pay it no real obedience; nor be again cloth'd with purple, crown'd and saluted King, to advance the triumph of his scorn and Crucifixion.

13. Nor will the fawning professions of the demure hypocrite avert, but accelerate this fate: He that makes the *golden scepter* in Christ's hand, a rod of *iron* in his own, that thinks his Saintship licenses him to all the severe censures, and the yet severer (because more effective) oppressions of others, he is certainly to be lookt on not only as a rebel, but an usurper too, and is of all others the highest provoker. He that tramples under foot the Son of God, does not so much violate him, as he that pretends to erect him a throne upon blood and rapine, on perjury and sacrilege: Nor does he that accounts the blood of the *Covenant* an unholy thing, so much profane it, as he that uses it as a *varnish* to paint over his foulest lusts. The Apostle has long since told us, *There is no concord between Christ and Belial*, and can we think he will be patient thus to be made subservient to his enemy? or suffer his *ark* to be set for the support, which should be the confusion of *Dagon?* Do we find him so severely upbraid the hypocrisie of the *Jews*, that *stole, murdered, committed adultery, and swore falsly, and yet came and stood before him in his house?* Jer. 7. 9. and shall we hope he will connive at it in Christians? Was it intolerable profanation in them, to account his house a den of robbers, and shall we be permitted to make it so? They are sent to *Shiloh* to read their own destiny, and surely we are likely to find ours there too; to be deprived of those advantages, which we have so unworthily us'd: Nor can we expect, that though God cause the natural *sun to rise still as well on the evil as the good*, yet that the *sun of righteousness* shall continue to shine on those, who will only bask themselves in his rays, grow *Ethiops* from his *neighbourhood*, but will not work by his *light*.

God's Patience provoked by these sins.

14. When all this is consider'd, what a sad abode does it make? When the *blasphemies* of the profane, the *sensualities* of the voluptuous, and the *mockeries* of the hypocrite, send, as it were, daily challenges to heaven, we cannot but look it should at last overcome its long-suffering, awake God to vindicate the honour of his name, and not suffer it any longer to be thus prostituted and polluted; that when he sees his light serve only to aid us the more subtilly to contrive our deeds of darkness, he should withdraw it, smite us with blindness like the *Sodomites*, whom he finds in such impure pursuits: And were that *blindness* such as our Saviour speaks of, *John.* 9. 41. that inferr'd the *no sin*, 'twere a desirable infliction; but alas, it has none of that property. That which is design'd for the punishment, can never be the extenuation of our guilt; but as in hell there is an unhappy separation of *effects*, the scorching of the *flame* without the light, and the blackness of *night* without the rest: So in this nearest approach to it, this portal to those chambers of death, there is the ignorance without the excuse, the darkness divested of its native quality of hiding. And when we are entred among Heathens here, we must yet expect a sadder portion of *apostatiz'd* Christians hereafter.

15. And

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15. And O that this consideration might at last have its proper operation, rouse and awake us timely to prevent those evils which it will be impossible to cure! That by bringing forth some more genuine and kindly fruits, we may avert that dismal sentence, *Cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground?* That men would generally lay to heart both the sin and infamy of being *promoters of publick ruin;* and quench that fire with their tears, which their sins have kindled, that the fasting and prayers, the sighs and groans of the primitive Christians may supplant the profane luxuries, the carnal jollities of the modern. And that sackcloth and ashes may become the *universal mode*, the only *fashionable* dress among us. This both reason and religion suggests as matter of our most importunate wishes; would God our hopes were but half as pregnant!

Which Repentance only can appease.

16. But the less appearance there is of this universal reformation, the more jealously ought every single person to look on himself, lest he be one that obstructs it: For so he does, who stays till it be a *fashion*, but neglects to contribute his part to the making it so. Men are willing to discourage themselves from attempts of this kind, and with an unseasonable modesty, can reflect what a nothing one man is to so many millions, when alas! all that vast empire vice has got in the world, is founded in the pravity of single persons, and would certainly be ruin'd by their reformation. The more reasonable collection would be, that he that considers himself but as *one*, should not suffer himself to grow into *less;* to fall from that *unit* to a *cypher*, by permitting sloth or cowardice to enfeeble and emasculate him; but on the contrary should recollect his spirits, actuate all his strength, and therefore be sure to do his utmost, because that *utmost* is but a *little*.

Every man to amend one;

17. And to this certainly there want not encouragements. We see in common affairs the wonders that industry and resolution are able to effect, and a single courage being exerted, has often without *romance*, overcome *giantly* difficulties. 'Tis a great prejudice is cast upon virtue by the pusillanimity of those that *like*, but dare not *abet* her. When most men commit all impieties daringly, and openly, and those few that do mourn for it, do it but in secret, the example of the one is contagious, but the other has no means to diffuse it self. Would men stoutly own *duty*, and not like *Peter, follow Christ afar off*, they might yet hope to make a party and *gain ground* in the world. And how noble an attempt were this, thus to encounter Satan in his highest triumph, and recover a *lost field?* And methinks those who have any warmth of piety glowing within, may easily thus improve it into a flame, ἐπιχορηγήσαι ἐν τῇ πίστει τ ἀρετὴν, *add to their faith virtue*, as that signifies *courage;* and then readily would succeed that train of Christian excellencies reckoned up by St. *Peter*, 2 *Epist.* 1. 5. *knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness*, and superstruct on these, as it there follows, *brotherly kindness*, and the most comprehensive *charity*. We should be not only devout towards *God*, but zealous towards *men*, endeavouring by all prudent means to recover them out of those snares of the Devil, whereby they are taken captive. And since among all those snares there is none more entangling, than the creditableness and repute of customary vices, to set themselves especially against that overgrown covering and ornament; those *locks* wherein its great, its *Samson like strength* lies: And strive to render it as condemn'd as it is base. And to this purpose nothing is so apt, as the exalting its competitor, fetching virtue out of the dungeon, that darkness and obscurity wherein it has long lain forgotten, and by making it illustriously visible in their own practice, put it into the possibility of attracting others. Indeed there only it appears in its true splendor, they are but dead colours the sublimest speculation can put on it, he that would draw it to the life, must imprint it upon his own. And thus every pious person may, nay, ought to be a *Noah*, a preacher of righteousness: And if it be his fortune to have as impersuasible an auditory, if he cannot avert the *deluge*, it will yet be the providing himself an *ark*, the delivering, yea, advancing his own soul, if he cannot benefit other mens.

and take part with Religion.

18. Nay, this being a *Noah* may qualifie him to be a *Moses* too, give him such an interest with heaven, that he may be fit to stand in the gap, to be an *intercessor* and mediator for a provoking people. And God knows never any generation more needed that *office;* nor any part of this more than our sinful nation, which having long been in the *furnace*, is indeed now come out, but so unpurified, that we have all reason to expect a return, and that not upon the former frustrated design of *refining;* but upon that more infallible and fatal one of *consuming* us. This is so dreadful, but withal so just an expectation, that if there be any *Jacobs* among us, any *who can wrestle and prevail with God*, there never was so pressing need of their intercession. O let all that are thus fitted for it vigorously undertake this pious work; let no *Moses's* hands ever wax heavy, but be always held up in a devout importunity; let them

And intercede with God on its behalf.

transcribe that holy oratory, which he so often effectually used, plead to God his own cause, with a *What wilt thou do to thy great name?* And when there is nothing in us that can pretend to any thing but vengeance, ransack God's *bosom*, rifle his *bowels* for arguments of *compassion*, repeat to him his own *titles*, that he is *long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin*, Numb. 14. 18. And by these solicite, yea, conjure him to pity. And how great an ardency is required to this intercession? What *strong* cries must they be that shall drown so *loud* a clamor of impieties? And how does it reproach the slightness of our sleepy heartless addresses? Can we hope to bind God's hands with withs and straws? to arrest his vengeance with such faint and feeble assaults? And when *nature* and *danger* suggest to Heathen *Nineveh*, not *only* to cry, but cry *mightily* to God, shall the superaddition of our religion damp ours into a *whisper*, a soft *unaudible* sound? A storm will teach the profane mariner to pray in earnest, and alas! we have not wanted that discipline. 'Tis not long since we might have said with those, *Acts* 27. *No small tempest has long lain on us, neither sun nor stars in many days*, nay, in many *years*, *appearing*, nothing but black and dismal portents of a final *wreck* to a poor *weather-beaten Church*, and then sure 'twas time to be importunate, to learn so much of instruction from the waves that tossed us, as to make our prayers keep pace with them, in swift uninterrupted succession, in loud and not to be resisted violence. That we did so *then* I dare not affirm, but sure I am, the necessity of it is not *yet* out-dated; for though the sky however black with clouds carry no thunder in it; though the impetuous winds that blow from every quarter, should not break out in tempest, and bring shipwreck to us; yet we too fully exemplifie the truth of the *Prophet*'s axiom, *That the wicked are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest.* We have *within* us a principle of ruin, which can operate, though nothing from *without* excite it. A tempest is not always necessary to sink a ship, one treacherous leak may do it in the greatest calm; and what security can there then be to our torn vessel, whose rents our continued divisions do still keep open? Indeed our *preservation* must be as our *restoration* was, the work of Omnipotence; thither therefore let us address with St. *Peter*'s pathetick prayer, *Save, Lord, or we perish.* O that all who are concern'd in the grant of that petition, would qualifie themselves to present it; lift up such pure hands, *that God who hears not sinners*, John 9. 31. may yet hear them, afford a gracious ear, and give an answer of *peace.*

CHAP. III.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Inconsideration.

Occasions of the foregoing unhappiness, and

Sect. 1. THE last section having defeated all the promising hopes of the former, by shewing us how sadly we have frustrated all the designs and engagements of our profession; enervated all those apt and powerful methods, and how perfectly contrary our *practices* are to our *rules*, mere curiosity would more prompt us to enquire what are the hidden *causes* of those so strange *effects*; what unhappy propriety there is in the *soil*, that after so much *culture*, and husbandry it should produce nothing but *wild* grapes; and by what arts and wiles Satan has not only evaded, but even retorted those blows which were aimed at him. But as in *diseases* the *pains* and languishing are obvious to the grossest sense, but the *springs* and originals of them most frequently lie deep, and are so complicated and interwoven, that they require much art to search and to distinguish them; nay, do often mock the most subtil inquisitor, and send him back with mere conjectures and uncertain guesses: So in this *Epidemick* spiritual distemper, the *malady* is notorious and visible, but the *causes* of it not so easily determin'd, yet that not so much from the darkness, as the number of them; so many do pretend, and that with very good colour, to this unhappy, this monstrous birth, that a *Solomon* himself must have made the proposal of dividing it, as not being able to have assign'd it intire to any one mother.

2. Indeed so many are the concurrents towards it, that it would far exceed the limits of this little Tract, but to point at them: I shall not therefore undertake any such *exact* enumeration, but shall only take notice of those which either for the generality or degree of their efficacy appear the most *eminent.*

3. And first, the great and stupid *Inconsideration*, which most men have concerning their religion, may well pass for a main cause of its frustration. *Christianity* may make *Archimedes* his *challenge*; give it but where it may set its foot, allow but a sober advertence to its proposals, and it will move the whole *world*; it comes with most invincible and controuling arguments, but still they are arguments, and those must first obtain *attention*, before they can force *assent*; they will most infallibly weigh down the *scales*, though the whole world were the *counter balance*; but then that must presuppose their being put into those scales, their being entertain'd with so much of deliberation, as may try and examine their weight. In a word, they address to us as men, that is, *creatures* endued by God with *rational* souls and discursive faculties; but if we will suppress these, and set up only the *brute* to give audience, we must not expect *Balaam*'s prodigy should be every day repeated, that the *beast* should be wiser than the *rider*, and consequently cannot wonder, if the success vary with the auditors.

First of Inconsideration.

4. And 'tis to be feared, that this is the state of most of us, that all the convincing *Logick*, that *demonstration of the Spirit*, as St. *Paul* calls it, and all the perswasive *Rhetorick* of the Gospel, find us so stupid and unconcern'd, that they can make no impression; all the avenues are so blockt up, that they can find no way of approaching us. We are like the *Indian* serpents *Philostratus* mentions, proof against all charms, but such as with their glittering splendor assault our eyes: Nothing moves us but what courts our senses, and what is not *gross enough* to be seen, we think *too nice* to be consider'd. The form and name of Christianity men find ready to their hands, and it costs them no labour to put it on; but should they be interrogated of the import and significancy of it, I fear many would be at a loss what to answer. Men call themselves *Christians*, as they do *French* or *English*, only because they were born within such a territory, take up their *religion* as a part of their *fate*, the temper of their *climate*, the entail of their *ancestours*, or any thing most remote from their choice; the profession of it descends to them by way of inheritance, and like young careless heirs, they never are at the charge to survey it, to inform themselves either of the issues or revenues of it; what burdens it lays, or what advantages it promises. Every man sees they are vast multitudes that have entered the *Baptismal* vow, and I fear no small numbers of them, that weigh it as little when they should *perform* it, as they did when they *made* it: Have no other notion of *Baptism*, but as a *custom* of the place, or a *time* of festivity: Consider no farther significancy in these spiritual bands, than they do in the swaddling clothes of their infancy, and can give no better account why they took on them *Christ*'s *livery*, than why they wear such *garments* as the *common fashion* of their country prescribes them.

Religion taken up upon trust.

5. This is in many the effect of gross Ignorance, that really know nothing that borders upon religion: And where that is the *principle*, we cannot think it strange to see their *practices* proportionable; this returns them into the state of *Heathenism*, and while they walk in that darkness, it is no wonder if they often fall: The only matter of admiration is, that there should be any such darkness among us; that *the glorious light*, as St. *Paul* terms it, *of the Gospel of Christ*, should not long e'er this have dispell'd it out of our *horizon*; and certainly, that it has not, must be owing to some very great guilt; so that concerning such persons, the Disciples question, *John* 9. 2. is very pertinent, *Who did sin, this man or his parents?* Where men are so ignorant, it must necessarily infer their *parents* negligence in infusing, or their *own* stubborn perverseness in resisting instruction: But 'tis more probable to conclude the former, since if children were early instituted, knowledge would insensibly insinuate it self, before their years had arm'd them with obstinacy enough to make head against it. But when by the parents remissness the proper seeds-time is lost, the soil grows stiff and untractable; the *labour* of learning averts their childhood, and the *shame* of it their manhood, and so they grow old in their Ignorance, are ready to *leave* this world before they come to *know* any thing of that which is to succeed it. This is a *common*, but certainly a most *deplorable* case; and as it loudly accuses those parents, who thus wretchedly hazard their childrens greatest concernments, so certainly it reflects not very laudably upon those, who by slighting that excellent order of *Confirmation* in this Church, have besides all other advantages of it, robb'd them of that happy reserve, which the care of their *spiritual* parent had provided to repair the negligence of their *natural*; but guilt has a miserable kind of infinity, and lessens not by being communicated; and therefore though these unknowing persons may with justice enough *accuse* others, yet can they never the more *absolve* themselves. Indeed they cannot tax others omissions towards them, without a tacit reproach of their own; for if it were a fault in the

Peoples Ignorance proceeds from want of pious Education in some;

parent, to let their infancy want those necessary infusions, 'tis surely so in *themselves*, to let their riper years continue in that destitution. And sure, 'tis not probable there could be a more irrational motive to the *former*, than that which prevails with the *latter*, to wit, the fear of shame, which certainly much more properly belongs to him that lies stupidly under his want, than he that industriously sets to cure it: So that while they go thus preposterously to *avert* reproach, they invite it; nay, and do besides betray one of their most important secrets, discover themselves more solicitous about *appearances*, than *realities*; to be *thought* knowing, than to *be* so. A strange kind of *speculative* hypocrisie, which yet leads to all the *practical* profaneness incident to those, *who live without God in the world.*

and personal sloth and negligence in others;

6. But would God the uncatechiz'd were the only persons we had to complain of in this matter! There is another sort of *ignorant*, who have not that plea; who by a wretchless *inconsideration*, have made a shift to *unlearn* what they had once been *taught*. That this is naturally very possible, no man can question, that observes how *desuetude* will rob a man of any science, or other habit. But in this case there is yet a farther concurrent towards it; Christs parable tells us of *fowls that devoured the seed*, which himself interprets to be the *Wicked one*, which catcheth away the word sown in mens hearts. When that spiritual seed lies loose and scatter'd upon the surface, and is not by deep and serious meditation harrowed, as it were, into the ground, it offers it self a ready prey to the devourer, and God knows the *event* is too ready to attest the *truth* of the observation. For do we not see *many*, whose childhoods have wanted nothing of Christian nurture, that have had all advantages to the making them *wise unto salvation*, yet suffer their manhood to wear out and obliterate all those *rudiments* of their youth; and that not only out of their *practice*, but even out of their *memory* too? This (would we be patient to have the experiment made) would, I doubt not, be found true in divers, and they would appear less able to approve themselves, not only to the *confessor*, but even to the *catechist* in their *adult age*, than they were in their *minority*; as having scarce ever thought of the principles of their religion, since they conn'd them to avoid correction; and then 'tis no wonder, if they pass into the same *forgetfulness* with other the occurrences of that *slippery* age.

and want of making a particular application of the Articles of our Creed.

7. But if with some the *memory* have been so invincibly *faithful*, as not to have resign'd its *Depositum*; if it do happen obstinately to retain those early impressions which were made on it; yet alas! that alone will be of little avail. 'Tis true, that is the store-house, and 'tis good to have that well replenish'd; but if its *plenty* be only within it self, uncommunicated; if the *granary*, though never so full, be seal'd up, it gives no security against a *famine*. A man's remembrance of his *Creed* may tell him there is a *God*, and that he is Almighty; but if his Reason be so much asleep, as not to infer from thence the necessity of reverencing and obeying him, who is all-powerful to revenge our contempts, he may repeat the *Article* every day, and yet nevertheless *atheistically*. In like manner he may go on to the Birth, Death, and Resurrection of Christ; but if he weigh not the obligations to gratitude and duty, which devolve on him from thence, he may remember his *Birth*, and yet never be *regenerate*; his *Death*, and yet not *die to sin*; and his *Resurrection*, and yet *lie rotting* in his own *corruption*, and not rise with him to *newness of life*. So he may proceed to his *coming to judge the quick and the dead*: But if he reflect not on his own particular concernment in it; if he consider not that *for every the secretest thing*, Eccl. 11. *God will bring him*, as well as others, *to judgment*; he may talk of *Dooms-day* as men do of such *assises* as they have no trial at, but it will never set him a trembling, or give him the providence to anticipate his sentence; so judge himself here, that he may not be judged of the Lord. And so proportionably in all the parts of our Christian faith; he that does not extract from them their proper and just inferences, shall never feel their efficacy. He has indeed in that excellent *System* a most infallible *Catholicon*, against all his spiritual maladies; but 'tis a medicine, not a charm; to be taken, not laid by him; and if he fail in *application*, he will as certainly miss of the *cure*: And this gives us one too clear a reason, why *so many*, in the most fatal sense, *are sick and weak among us, and fallen asleep*, are first *lethargick*, and then stark *dead in trespasses and sins*. Men do not by sober consideration suck out the virtue which would heal them; they look on the Creed as *Christ's badge*, and so long as they bear that, they think none must question their *Christianity*: Whereas 'tis indeed more properly his military *Symbolum*, or recognition of the cause, and General they fight for; an engaging them to all the obedience, fidelity and constancy of resolute soldiers: And to this purpose it is that we *stand up* at the recital of the Creed, as owning our baptismal promise, to *fight* manfully under our Saviour's *Banner* against *Sin*, the *World*, and the *Devil*; and if we do not thus, 'tis not material

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what professions we make, we are the same deserters, whether we *stay* in our own Camp, or *run* over to the enemies; *throw away* our arms, or *not use* them; *renounce* our Christian Faith, or not *improve* it. Sloth is as mischievous in war, as treachery, or cowardice, and he that keeps his *sword* in the *sheath*, is as unformidable an enemy, as he that brings *none* into the *field*.

8. And how many such insignificant *combatants* are there in the Christian Camp, that only lend their *names* to fill up the *Muster-roll*, but never dream of going upon *service*? 'Tis certain there are as many such, as there are careless unconsidering Professors: And these, 'tis to be fear'd, make so great a number, that were the Church put to estimate her *forces*, and examine what effectively her *strength* is, she would find the deceit of *false musters*, as great among the *Spiritual* as the *Civil* Soldiery. It is indeed a most amazing thing to see, that that which is the one great and important interest of all men, should of all other things meet with the least regard. If we make a proposal of worldly profit, though incumber'd with many difficulties, and liable to many uncertainties, we shall not only have an attentive hearing, but active care, and diligent pursuit of the design; it will be driven to the last glimpse of hope; and if the first attempt miscarry, the next occasion is laid hold of; but here, where the *prize* is so rich, the *conditions* so easie, the *acquist* so certain, yet (as if these were deterring, averting qualities) we cannot be got to take the matter into our deliberation. Alas! what stupid folly has possest men? And by what *measures* do they make their *estimates*? How are their precious Souls become so vile in their eyes, that they are the only part of them, which they think below their regard? In an *Epidemick* disease every man looks out for *Antidote*, or *Medicine* for his own peculiar, and does not acquiesce in that silly confidence, that he shall do as well as other men: Yet in this greater danger, that is their avowed comfort, and keeps them as chearful, as if they had the most solid grounds of security. Alass, can numbers *outface* damnation, or do men hope, that by going in troops to Hell, they shall *master* the native inhabitants, *subdue* those legions of tormentors, and become *conquerors* instead of *sufferers*? This is sure too wild an imagination for any to entertain, yet what more sober one can any pretend in favour of so stupendous an improvidence?

Christians grown too careless and secure,

9. But 'twill be much more seasonable to *reform*, than *apologize* or *rhetoricate*; and therefore 'twill import those men, who like the inhabitants of *Laish*, dwell *careless*, quiet, and secure, to look about them; to enter into *serious* consultation how they may avert that ruine, which waits upon such a supine temper; not to suffer themselves to perish in the midst of such possibilities, nay solicitations to be saved: but at last afford an audience to that embassie, which is sent them from Heaven. Ponder well those *easie* terms of reconciliation which are propos'd: the *inestimable advantages* consequent to the embracing that amity; and the as *inestimable detriment* of refusing it: In a word, not to please themselves with the *empty title*, but to penetrate the *full purport* and significancy of their Christianity; and when they have done this soberly and attentively, having removed this first, and most general obstruction to piety, they will find themselves assaulted by such force of *Reason*, that they must either be very ill *Logicians*, or very good *Christians*.

ought to consider their danger.

CHAP. IV.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Partial Consideration.

1. NEXT to the *stupid*, and merely vegetable state of total incogitancy, we may rank that *Partial* and piece-meal Consideration, by which Christianity is mutilated and deform'd, depriv'd of all its force to attract and subdue mens hearts: for as in *artificial* movements, there is such a dependance of one part upon another, that the substracting of any one destroys the whole frame: so in this *spiritual* machin, design'd to raise our dull mortality to Heaven, the divine wisdom of its Maker has combin'd its several parts, that he, who severs, ruines; he that applies it not in its united strength, will find no aid from its unjoynted scattered particles. St. *Paul* tells us, 1 *Cor.* 12. that in the natural body, the making it all eye, or hand, the reducing the many members to one, is destructive to its being? (if they were all one member, where were the body, *verse* 20.) and we in reason must expect the same event will follow here. If we advance one part of our Christian Faith to the annihilation of

Partial Consideration.

the rest, 'tis impossible that should supply the place of the whole; but the more that member is swoln above its native size, the more *unwieldy*, not the more *strong* it grows; and loses that active vigour, which is receiv'd by a social communication with the other parts.

Touching the Promises of God. 2. 'Tis God's charge against the *Priests*, *Mal.* 2. that *they have been partial in the Law*, נשאים פנים *lifters up of faces in it*; preferr'd *some* more agreeable parts, and discountenanc'd *others*; were not *only* judges of the Law, but *unjust* judges too. And I fear the indictment may now run more generally against the people also; that they have been partial in the Gospel, cull'd and chosen out those softer and more gentle dictates, which should less grate and disturb them; like well the *Oil* that makes them have a chearful countenance, but are not so forward to deal with the *Wine*, which should search and cleanse their sores. We make all our addresses to the *promises*, hug and caress them, and in the interim let the *commands* stand by neglected. A *Divinity* indeed fitly apportion'd to the devotion of *these times*, which loves to make an *offering to God of that which costs them nothing*, and yields a preference to that way of *worship*, which assures Salvation *best cheap*, and at the *easiest terms*; but would men consider, they would find, that the *commands* are the supreme, and most eminent part of the *Evangelical Covenant*, the *promises* come but as *handmaids* and attendants: an honourable retinue to invite the more respectful entertainment, and it should be remembred, that of this *sort* are the *threatnings* too; and therefore, they have surely an equal right to our regard, especially when many of them have the accession of God's *Oath*, to bind and strengthen their *performance*. And what a scandalous and absurd partiality is this, that when the precepts come with this solemnity, the more to command our reverence, we single out this one part of the train, and pay our homage unto it; lay hold on the *promises*, not those that speak *damnation* to impenitence, but the other half of them, which give *assurances* of favour? And like the *Benjamites* to the daughters of *Shiloh*, run away with them, possess our selves of these by rape, in spight of all the incapacities we lie under; though God has sworn, that no disobedient provoker shall enter into his rest.

Encourageth to presume on God's goodness, 3. That this is really the case of many, is more than probable; for by what other artifice is it possible for them to reconcile their large hopes, with their no purifying; their confident expectations of Heaven, with their greedy rapacious pursuits of Earth; their secure dependence on the Blood of their *Saviour*, with their remorseless effusions of that of their *Brethren*? Did they consider the inseparable *connection* between the Precepts and the Promises, 'twere hard for them to be so *wicked*, but impossible to be so *sanguine*. Did the *unclean* person believe that none but *the pure in heart shall see God*, if he could be so much *Swine* as still to chuse the *mire*, yet sure he could not expect to be rapt from thence into Heaven. Did the *Drunkard* consider the sentence of the Apostle, *excluding all such from the Kingdom of God*, 1 *Cor.* 6. 10. if he can be content so sadly to over-buy this sin, as to pay that Kingdom for his shot; yet certainly, even he cannot be sot enough to expect the possession of what he has so sold, or hope that from one of his drunken *trances* he shall *awake to glory*. Did the covetous Extortioner observe, that he is involv'd in the same sentence, remember that such violents shall take not *Heaven*, but *Hell by force*: if the terrors of the Lord could not have force enough to melt his bowels, to unclutch his griping hand, or disseize him of his prey: Yet sure it must discourage him from grasping of Heaven too, from hoping to defraud *God*, as he has done *men*, and striking himself into an estate in the land of the living. And in like manner, all other hoping sinners, if they would ruine, yet must cease from flattering themselves, must chuse *damnation* bare-fac'd, and not fancy that their posting on in the broad way, shall ever bring them to life. And sure this discovery of their estate were a very good step to the curing it, for though, 'tis possible some few may be of so sturdy an impiety, as to chuse their sin with all its consequents, yet sure all sinners are not of that strong complexion, and therefore Satan is put to his wiles and artifices, is fain to *hoodwink* those that are apt to start, and disguises the danger, when he sees the true appearance of it will terrifie and avert. This was his old policy with our *first* Parents; he dazles their eyes with the *glorious*, but *abusive* proposal of becoming like *Gods*, that they might not discern how near they were approaching to become like *Devils*: And this under the pretence of confidence and friendship, discovering as it were a secret to them, that God envied them that promotion, which his greater kindness was solicitous to procure for them. And as if the ruine of mankind in *Massa* had been too slight a *Trophy* for that one stratagem, he repeats it again to the individuals, persuades men that the path of obedience, which God has chalk'd out, is strait and narrow, rugged and incumbred; that there is a shorter cut,

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an easier passage to life; that they may be led into *Canaan* a nearer way, step into it immediately from the flesh-pots of *Egypt*, and scape the tedious weary march in the *Wilderness*; never so much as call at Mount *Sinai*, or be affrighted with the *Thunders of the Law*. In a word, they need not *work out their Salvation*, but be they never so slothful, *they may inherit the Promises*, Heb. 6. 12. This is his one grand *Conclusion*, though he has several *mediums* to infer it by: Wherewith, as with so many *tools* and *Engines*, he furnishes men for the *filing* or breaking of that sacred Link between Duty and Reward; and of these he has great variety fitted to the hands, and skill of those that manage them. I shall not undertake to ransack his *Workhouse*, or give an inventory of his *Utensils*, but shall rather in general beseech all those, who have made this unhappy separation, to remember from whose *Forge* they took their *Instruments*; and then consider, whether his officiousness in supplying them, can argue any thing, but that 'tis his work they are about. Can any think that he, whose eternal pastime it will be to torment men, can really be solicitous of their ease; that he would chuse out for them the *pleasantest paths*, were it not, that he knows they lead to the *chambers of death*? When *Christ*, whose sole business it was to save mens Souls, has prescribed us a *course*, which shall assuredly conduct us unto *happiness*; what can it be but phrensie to resort to *Abaddon*, the destroyer, for an easier method, or expect more gentleness and compassion from the *roaring Lion*, than from the *Lamb of God*?

and doubt of his faithfulness.

4. Nay, indeed this is not only to attribute to him more tenderness, but fidelity too; to believe him in opposition to all the express affirmations of God; and when he who is truth it self has told us, *That except we repent, we shall all perish*, *Luke* 13. 6. and that *without holiness, no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. 12. 14. to disbelieve this only upon his bare credit, who was a Lyar from the beginning: This indeed is a prodigious composition of blasphemy and folly, a strange contumely to *God*, but fatal treachery to our selves. For, alas! Satan entertains us all this while but with a trick of *Legerdemain*, and as *Juglers* make us believe we have cut the string, which yet presently after they shew us whole; so he persuades us, he has thus sever'd the *Condition* from the *Promises*, when to our grief it will finally appear their union was inviolable. 'Tis not all our vain confidence that can reverse the immutable divine Law; we may 'tis true, delude our selves, keep up our spirits high; in a secure jollity *eat and drink, and rise up to play*, and so not only loiter, but revel out our *day*, till the *night* overtake us, *wherein no man can work*; but we shall never be able to propagate the deceit, where only it could avail us; to persuade God to pay the *hire* to those that have been no labourers, or give the *prize* to any, who have not run to obtain it. Let every man therefore in a just tenderness to his own Soul strictly examine his hopes, try, not how high they towre, but how deep they are founded; whether on the *sand*, or on the *rock*; the flattering delusions of Satan, and the dreams of his own fancy, or on the Promises of God: For though all pretend to build on the latter, yet God knows, a multitude of foolish *Architects* there are, which mistake their ground, take that for assurance, that is not. And this truly is a thing deserves to be soberly consider'd; they that most greedily catch at the promises, do often embrace a *cloud* instead of the *Deity*, which they so eargerly grasp, and thereby think to enjoy. But *faithful* obedience, and not insolent hopes commend us unto God. The Gospel indeed describes to us great and inestimable *felicities*, but he that can think this gives him a *title* to them, may as well pretend to the whole *World*, because he has the *Map* of it in his House: For though it mentions them to all, yet it promises them to none but the obedient. And those *Israelites* which fled from the sight of *Goliath*, 1 *Sam*. 17. 25. might as reasonably challenge the reward propos'd to the Victor, as men can pretend to enter into life without keeping the Commandments. This then is the one *Criterion*, by which a man may judge of his hopes; if they be but proportionable to his obedience, they are then regular, and such as will not make him asham'd, but prove incentives and engagements to every good work. Let him obey as much as he can, and then he need not deny himself the comfort of hoping as much as he can too: But if his *hopes* exceed this measure, and square themselves only by his *wishes*; if he look for Heaven, not because he is *qualified* for it, but because he wants or covets it; this is rather to dream, than hope, and such *whimsies* will as soon invest the beggar in *wealth*, the defam'd in *honour*, the sick in *health*, or any man in any thing he has but a mind to, as compass *Heaven* for the bold *Fiduciary*.

Folly to hope for Heaven, while we be unqualified for it.

5. It is indeed like those *Lunacies*, wherein mens fancies adopt them Heirs to those Kingdoms they know nothing more of, than the names; and sure the Analogy holds as well in the *cure* as the *disease*: Let these Patients a while be kept dark, taken from the dazling contemplations of their imaginary privileges, to the sad reflection on

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their sins: And as God expostulates with *Israel*, *Ezek.* 33. 26. *Ye stand upon the sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every man his neighbour's wife, and shall ye possess the land?* So let them recite to themselves the Catalogues of their impieties, and then ask their own hearts, whether these be the qualifications of those that shall rest in God's holy hill? Whether these marks of the *Beast* can ever rank them among the followers of the *Lamb?* And let these Considerations be prest home, reiterated so often, till by repeated strokes they have made good the other part of the method, made their Souls bleed, and by that spiritual *Phlebotomy*, temper'd their swelling veins, allayed the over-sanguineness of their Constitution: And then there remains but one thing more to compleat the course, and that is bringing them into the *Workhouse*, setting them really to *work out* their *salvation with fear and trembling*, which they had so near played away by confidence and presumption. And when they have done thus, they have verified their hopes, and then may safely reassume them: They are return'd again with advantage to their first point, and are that in *soberness* and *reality*, which they then were only in *fiction* and *imagination*.

How to judge of sound Doctrine. 6. And now would God men would once be content to be thus disabus'd; that they would not be so in love with deceit, as in the Prophet's phrase, *Jer.* 8. 5. to *hold it fast*: That they would not chuse *Chimæra's* and *phantastick* Images, before real and substantial felicities; and prefer that hope, which will be sure to *shipwreck* them, before that which will be *an Anchor of the Soul, sure and stedfast*, *Heb.* 6. 19. and if this so reasonable a proposal may be embrac'd, if the World should, as the *Spaniard* said, but *rise wise one morning*, what a deal of dead merchandize would Satan have upon his hands? Many of those they call the comfortable Doctrines, would want vent, which are now the staple commodity of his Kingdom. What those are, 'tis no part of my design to examine, it will be every man's particular concern to do it for himself; which he may do by this one test; Whether they more animate men to *hope* well, than to *live* well? Whether they bring *Alexander's* Sword to cut asunder the *Gordian* knot, to sever between the Promise and the Condition? or the Sword of the *Spirit* to subdue all to the obedience of Christ? If the former, we may expect the fruits of such will be all that licentiousness which St. *Paul* describes, as *the works of the flesh*, *Gal.* 5. 19. it being not to be imagin'd, that the *precepts* of the Gospel, which they divide from the *promises* only, that they might fall off, shall then be *voluntarily* taken up in mere good nature and heroick Generosity; that those who are so industrious to avoid the necessity of *Christian Practice*, will make it their *free-will-offering*. If there should happen to be some few of so ingenuous a gratitude; yet 'tis certain that is not our common mould; few men will be better than they think their interest bids them be, and therefore such Principles are dangerous Seminaries of *Libertinism*, and 'tis mens very important concernment not to admit them. Let not then their chearful *aspect* recommend them to our *embraces*; men may be kill'd with too much *Cordial*; that which seems to refresh the *Spirits* may enflame the *Blood*, and though *cold poisons* have gotten the fame of being the most *malignant*, yet there are *hot* that are as infallibly *mortiferous*. Let it be our care in opposition to both, to keep our selves in that moderate, equal temper, which belongs to *healthy* Souls: And since that is the vitallest heat, which is gotten by exercise, set to our business, employ our selves diligently in all those duties the Gospel exacts, and then we shall not want such an hope as may warm our hearts, keep us in a chearful expectation, till we come to the glorious fruition of that *eternal Salvation, which God has promised to all them, and only them that obey him*. And till we do thus, till we consider as well what we are to *do*, as what we are to *receive*, there will be no hope of restoring Christianity to its native vigour: We shall make it evaporate all its strength in *insignificant hopes*, convert it into air, to bear up our bubbles, instead of that firm ground, whereon we should build *virtue* here, and *glory* hereafter.

CHAP. V.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Carnal Consideration.

Carnal Consideration an enemy to Religion. 1. AFTER the disadvantages of *Partial Consideration* may fairly be subjoyn'd the ills of that advertency, which is impregnated by *sensuality* and *sloth*, and makes pretence unto right *Reason*, but tends indeed as much as any thing to the frustrating the design, and enfeebling the force of our Religion; such close *reserves* of deceit,

and

and malice have men to their own souls, that when they quit one strong hold of Satan's, 'tis only to retreat to another. When they are not so brisk and aerial, as lightly to skip over those precepts that lie in their way, they are so gross and unwary as to fall at them; if they may not pass for straws and chaff, such as every blast of vain confidence may blow away, they shall then be improved into heaps and mountains, become stones of stumbling, and rocks of offence; and when they are call'd upon to consider them, they do it in so perverse a manner, as if they meant to revenge themselves on that unwelcome importunity: Their *consideration* is worse than *neglect*. They look into them insidiously, not as *disciples*, but as *spies*; not to weigh the obligingness, but to quarrel at the unreasonableness or difficulty of the injunctions; not to direct their *practice*, but excuse their *prevarication*.

2. From this unsincere kind of inspection it is, that the *precepts* have got so formidable appearance with many, that they have fallen under such heavy prejudices, as to resolve them intolerable yokes, insuperable tasks; that this *Canaan* is a land that eats up its inhabitants, wherein there is so little of *enjoyment*, that it scarce affords a *being*. Men count a life under such restraints so joyless and uneasie, that it differs from death only, by being more *passive*. They think *zeal* like a *Hectick fever*, in a slow, but certainly fatal *fire*, exhausts and consumes the *spirits*. Mortification and *self-denial* macerate and decay the *body*; and *liberality* dissipates and wastes the *estate*: And with these apparitions, which themselves have conjur'd up, men run frighted from duty, resolve the burthen is insupportable, or at least grievous to be borne; and therefore as our Saviour says of the *Pharisees*, *will not touch it*, no not so much as *with one of their fingers*, Matt. 23. 4. never make any attempt to try what indeed they are; but take their measures from their own, or perhaps other mens prejudicate opinions, and thence take out an *authentick record* and *patent* for sloth, fancy the journey too long for them, and therefore sit still; first call Christ's Commandments *grievous*, and then improve that slander into a *manumission*; absolve themselves from obeying them. And unless they may have the gate to life cut wider, made capacious enough to receive them with all their lusts about them; will never essay to enter it.

Begets hard thoughts of God's Commands.

3. But if the *prince of darkness* have enacted it a law, that difficulty shall pass for excuse, yet if real uneasiness may be admitted to be as deterring as imaginary ones, his own decree will retort the most ruinously on himself, and men may plead it as their discharge from all those base drudgeries, those tyrannous impositions, wherewith he loads them. The *drunkard* may experimentally tell him the *pain* of an aking head, of an overcharged stomach, the *ruin* of a wasted estate, and claim a dispensation from pursuing that uneasie and costly sin. The *wanton* may bring his macerated body like the *Levite's* concubine, *Judg.* 19. and urge it as an evidence, how cruel a master he serves; and from thence emancipate and free himself. And indeed every sin carries in it so much of visible toil, or secret smart, as would by force of this rule supplant and undermine it self; and sure *Satan* would never have arm'd men with so dangerous a weapon, had he not discern'd them so in love with slavery, as secures him it should never be us'd against him; for if it should, nothing could give him a more mortal wound, more irrecoverably shake his kingdom. Nor would only that infernal region feel the force of that destructive principle; it would make as strange confusions in secular regiments.

Inconveniences of a wicked life.

4. For if such *pleas* as these may be admitted, they will easily cancel all human, as well as divine Laws, and every malefactor will transfer his guilt on the severity of the *Legislator*: The *thief* may say, it is too great a difficulty for him to resist the temptation of an apt opportunity, a rich prize; that his fingers are too slippery even for himself, and he cannot restrain them, and then quarrel at the strictness of the Law, which has rais'd so high a fence about mens properties, that he who climbs it, must endanger his *neck*. The *rebel* may complain, that the bands of *allegiance* are too strait, the yoke sits too close, galls and frets his tender flesh, exclaim loudly at the *tyranny* of those that laid it on, and in that out-cry drown the noise of his own treason. And so every other transgressor may accuse the rule, as accessary to his swervings, till at last the *Laws* be made the only *criminals*.

Strictness of the Law made an excuse for disobedience.

5. I leave every man to judge both of the equity and consequences of such discoursings in *civil* matters, and shall only desire he will apply them to *spiritual* also, where certainly they are neither more just, nor less ruinous: And whilst such absurd *pretences* as these pass current, no wonder if *Christianity* languish and grow impotent, want strength to impress it self on the lives of its *professors*. The most infallible receipt can work no cure on him, who upon the suspicion of its bitterness, refuses to taste it. The most excellent *Laws* must lose their regulating power, where the execution of them

Ill consequences of that Principle.

them is obstructed; and we may as reasonably look for the efficacy of *Christianity* among those who never heard the *name*, as among those, who owning the *name*, do yet disclaim its *precepts*; and so all those interpretatively do, who by accusing them of too great rigour, avert both themselves and others from their obedience.

Such men ill judges of Religion.

6. That the charge is scandalously unjust will appear to any, who shall allow themselves the just means of information; but alas! the way of *process* men take in this affair, is so inequitable as certainly presages the partiality of the *sentence*: What person ever was there so innocent, so excellent, who if arraign'd at the *tribunal* of his mortal enemy, could be acquitted? *Christ* himself shall be pronounced a *blasphemer*, when a *Caiaphas* is to examine him: And no wonder if his *precepts* find proportionable dealing; if they be decried as *impossible*, *tyrannical*, perhaps *ridiculous* too, where the scanning of them is referred to those, whose interest it is to defame them. Men enthrone their *lusts*, set them up in the *judgment seat*, and none can expect they should pass such a sentence, as shall include their own *condemnation*: If they own the *commandment* to be *holy*, *just* and *good*, they must tacitly accuse themselves to be *impure*, *unjust* and *wicked*, and as such to be consign'd to wrath and judgment.

They beget prejudices against it.

7. Here then we have the true account how Christ's *commands*, which are in themselves so *far* from being grievous, have gotten so unkind a *reputation* among us; this is so direct a course for it, that we may cease our *wonder*, though not our *grief* to see it; for we behold them stand to the award of those with whom they have a profest enmity: The *goal* gives sentence on the bench; the *bar* arraigns the judgment-seat. Certainly when that Law which is *spiritual*, is submitted to the arbitrament of gross *carnality*, the law of liberty is taxed and rated by those worst *bond-men who are sold under sin*; 'tis impossible to find any fairer treatment. That which comes on purpose to dethrone sin, dispossess it of the empire it has usurpt, will certainly be entertain'd with the same *exclamation* the Devils us'd to Christ, *Why art thou come to torment us?* But as if this *general antipathy* were not enough to ascertain the rejection of Christ's command; as if the *national* feud, as I may call it, between Heaven and Hell were not thought irreconcileable enough, men offer yet harder measure, call it the aid of personal quarrels, and when the precepts come to be considered, refer each of them single to that particular vice to which it has the directest contrariety.

And make a wrong application of its Commands.

8. Thus when Christ's command of *meekness and forgiveness*, *of loving enemies*, *and turning the cheek*, *bearing the cross*, or *self-denial* calls for audience, they consult (as *Rehoboam* did with his young hot-spurs) with their anger and malice, their rancour and revenge, and they soon give their verdict, that to be *meek* is to be *servile*, a temper fit only for the abject: That to forgive enemies is a principle of *cowardice*, that would emasculate the world; to love them, a piece of spaniel-like fawning; but to turn the cheek, not only to hazard, but invite new injuries, by owning them as benefits; paying blessings for curses, kindness and good turns for hatred, is such a ridiculous patience, as must expose to the insolence of many, and the scorn and derision of all men. And then the resolution is ready, they will be no such fools for Christ's sake. So when the precept of humility and lowliness comes to be considered, their *pride* is deputed to hear its plea, and then tho' it bring the authority of Christ's *example* as well as his *command*, it will be judg'd invalid: *Christ* indeed *took upon him the form of a servant*, and to that, humility was a proportionable *adjunct*: But what is that to them, whose aspiring humour abhors subjection? 'tis not calculated for their *meridian*, they are of another manner of spirit, and would not have it embased by the admission of so mean a quality; and though Christ hath put *poverty of spirit* among his beatitudes, they resolve he shall not ensnare them with that *artifice*; they will not take his measures of felicity, or resign that pleasure they have in valuing themselves, for any thing he proposes in exchange. In like manner the precepts of temperance, sobriety and chastity, are not permitted to the judgment of sober *Reason*, nay, nor of mere natural desire, but to appetites vitiated and enflam'd by radicated *habits*; and then the *glutton* thinks to eat moderately, is to be starv'd, and will as soon *put a knife*, Prov. 23. *to his throat*, in the vulgar sense of cutting it, as in *Solomon's* notion of restraining his excess. Thus the *drunkard* with his false thirsts, looks on sobriety as a kind of Hell, where he shall want *a drop to cool his tongue*, and thinks the abandoning his debaucht jollities, is an implicit adieu to all the comforts of life. The *unclean* person, when his blood is high, scoffs at chastity as a religious kind of impotence, and only so far considers the *precept of pulling out the eye*, as to infer that it were as easie literally to part with it, as to restrain its lustful rage; not look at all, as not look to lust. And proportionably it fares with charity and bounty, which though our Saviour recommend, *Mammon* arraigns of robbery, and stigmatizes as a *thief* that picks the purse,

 and

and rifles coffers. But amidst all these, *the taking up the cross, suffering for righteousness sake*, and *the doctrine of self-denial*, fall under the heaviest prejudice. These are oppos'd not by some one single vice, but the confederate arms of all; even those, whose interests are flatly opposite, do here unite: *Herod* and *Pilate, Sadducees* and *Pharisees* accord against Christ, and all are freely suffer'd, nay, invited to exhibit their complaints against these *Mandates. Covetousness* cries out, that this is the most ruinous prodigality, casts away an estate in a lump, and lays all open to forfeiture and confiscation: And *prodigality* takes it as ill to be forestall'd, and have nothing left for it to dissipate. *Profaneness* avows a contempt of it as a folly, and most open madness, to part with real pleasure for an empty name, or profit for that *bankrupt thing* call'd Conscience. And *hypocrisie* has a more secret hatred of it, as its detector, that which will bring it to a test which it cannot pass. *Malice* puts in a *Caveat*, that this is to gratifie enemies, and lose the satisfactions of revenge: And *self-love* puts in another, that it is to destroy ones self. In short, every limb of the body of sin discharges a blow at this innocent and divine sanction; as if they meant it should exemplifie its own doctrine by assuming that passive temper it recommends.

Our lusts make us improper judges of our duty:

9. But alas! who can expect any more upright verdicts from such *packt* such *corrupt* juries, and why may not Christ be permitted to claim the common benefit of our laws, to make his challenge and exceptions against this so incompetent *impanel?* 'Tis the counsel of the Wise man, not to advise in common affairs with those whose tempers may be supppos'd to biass them, *Consult not*, says he, *with a coward in matters of war, nor with a sluggard of much business*, Ecclus. 37. 11. and sure if they be ill *counsellers*, they must be worse *judges*: But why then do we set pride to judge of humility, lust of purity, covetousness of liberality; and make our *vices* the *arbitrators* of those *Laws* which should restrain them? This is such a gross *injustice* as common *humanity* abhors; we deal by other measures with men, the most notorious and flagitious criminals, and reserve this way of process for those things only wherein our God may be concern'd. 'Tis a severe exprobration of a profane people, *Malach.* 1. 8. where God accuses them for treating *him* with less reverence than they would do a *mortal* prince. *Offer it* now *to thy Prince*: But alas! we shall force him to descend far lower in his expostulation; so far we are from paying him the *duty* and regard belonging to a *Prince*, that we yield him not the rights of *common* men; force him to stand to those measures which we think too inequitable to press upon a murderer, a thief, or rebel at the bar.

But Conscience is more equal or impartial in her judgment or verdict.

10. But this waving of common rules is a plain confession that we need more indulgence, than those will allow: When mens *lusts* thus usurp the *Tribunal*, and judge in their own cause, 'tis a palpable discovery they dare not remit themselves to any more equal determination. And indeed in this point of their interest, they pass a right judgment: For 'tis certain, were the *case* referr'd to any competent judge, indeed to *any* but *themselves*, they would inevitably be cast; and sure 'tis high time that some should assist *opprest virtue* in its appeal, find it out some *court* of *equity* where its plea may be heard: And we need not travel *far* for that purpose, every man may do it in his own *breast*, where in his little *common-wealth*, he shall find a *court* of God's erecting: Let him but draw the cause *thither*, discuss the matter in his own conscience; and he will soon find the former unrighteous sentences revers'd: Let him but seriously reflect on his *violations* of those sacred precepts of Christ, and observe what a *sting* and secret remorse every such *breach* leaves within him; and that will be a competent attestation of the *equity* and obligingness of those mandates: For from whence else can the regret arise? Those things that are either impossible in their nature, or unconcerning to us, cannot beget it. No man accuses himself for not flying in the *air*, or walking upon the *water*, nor owns himself *guilty* in the non-observance of any *Laws*, but such as have power to oblige him: And therefore these close pangs and checks of *conscience* are an irrefragable evidence, that men do *inwardly* assent to the justice and authority of those divine *rules*, which their *actions*, yea, often their *words* too, do most oppugn.

11. But over and above the throws and after-pains of conscience, when sin is brought forth, the self-accusation of the *criminal*, when none beside controuls, nay, many flatter and commend; I say beyond this secondary and reflext *Apologie* for Christ's Law, owed to the foregoing prevarication of it; there is an early and immediate *verdict* past in its behalf, in the esteem and liking which those documents command, where'er they pass; creating an assent and veneration, not only when obeyed; but from profest despisers, who cannot choose but think well of that virtue they desert, and the necessity of their affairs compels them to speak ill of. An event *visible* in

the condemnation of our Saviour, where the *Judge* who *gave sentence* against him, at the same moment *wash't his hands*, and openly profest, *he found no fault in him.*

The precepts of Religion are possible to be perform'd.

12. And indeed this very reflection on the *Author* of these precepts, if well consider'd, would supersede all other arguments. The *mandates* of the Gospel on this one score, that they are Christ's, are certainly both *pure* in themselves, and *possible* to us; and so most worthy, not only of all *obedience*, but all *love* too. He who is our *Lord* upon both the titles of *Creation*, and *Redemption*, may certainly with all justice impose what Laws he pleases on us. Yet he, who laid down his life for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first Testament, cannot be imagin'd so inconsiderate of our frailty which himself had smarted for, as to introduce another of equal rigour, or be so prodigal of his blood, as to pour it out for those, who by a new set of impossible commands, should infallibly reforfeit themselves again: And if this cannot be suppos'd, the contrary may be concluded, that he hath so far condescended to our imbecility, as not to *prescribe* us any thing which he either finds, or makes us not able to *perform*. 'Tis true indeed, his *Laws* are above the reach of our corrupt and debased *nature*; and they were unfit to be his, were they not so: But when he by his grace offers to elevate and refine this nature, bring it up to the pitch and purity of those Laws, this is a far greater mercy than if he had descended to our corruption; so he might have contaminated himself, given Laws unworthy of him: But alas! what advantage would it be to us, to have the *blasphemy* mention'd, *Psal.* 50. so verified; to have our *God* in this sense, *such a one as our selves?* But by this other *method* he purifies, and exalts us; puts us in a capacity of being *like unto him*, in which is summ'd up at once, all both *virtue* and *felicity*.

The end of Religion is to make us like God.

13. And on this glorious *end* every particular *command* of his has a direct aspect, every one of them tending to *re-impress* on us some part of that divine *image*, which was ras'd out by the *first sin*: And this, one would think enough to recommend them to our highest value. Certainly, if *conscience* may be *judge*, it will be so: There being in this case no middle between *devout* reverence, and horrid blasphemy; for he that despises such an *assimilation*, must necessarily also despise *him* who is so *resembled*: He who thinks meekness, purity, humility, *&c.* *unamiable qualities*, can have *little esteem* for him, in whom they are *transcendently eminent*, but will take the Prophet at his word, and say, *There is no form nor comeliness in him*, Isa. 53. 2. But this sure can never be the verdict of conscience; he that can thus *pronounce*, must be suppos'd to have supprest and *silenc'd* that. It being one of the most indelible *notions* there, that *all that is in God, is sublimely excellent.* But because 'tis indeed too possible that conscience may be put under such an undue restraint, suffer the violence of a *prisoner*, when it should sustain the place of a *judge:* Because many men dare not permit their consciences to speak, lest they should say more than they are willing to hear: And lastly, since these persons make their appeal to Reason, pretend the aids, and boast in the advantages of that, it may not be amiss to bring the *cause* unto that *bar*, whose *empire* and *authority* none must disclaim that own the *style*, and least of all those *Scepticks* in Religion, with whom we have to do; who will allow of no conviction but from it.

The duties of Religion are very agreeable to Reason.

14. And *God*, who, as the Apostle says, *leaves not himself without witness*, has so temper'd and dispos'd his *precepts*, as to qualifie them to pass even this *test* also, they being not the *contradictions* but *improvements* of natural Reason: And so most apt to recommend themselves to all that is *man*, not *brute* about us. Indeed they have the very same aim and design with that. It has ever been the grand business of *sober reason*, first to discover, and then to attain that *one supreme good*, which would give rest and felicity to the soul: In this inquisition have the *Philosophers* and greatest masters of Reason, laid out their most serious studies, and deepest contemplations, and in their indefatigable pursuits, seem jointly to sigh out *David*'s question, *Who will shew us any good?* And now the *Gospel* comes a solution of this so important a query, *brings these glad tidings of joy* to all people, and that not only in its *credenda*, by informing us what that *good* is; but in its *agenda* too, by tracing us out the way to it; beating us a path which will certainly lead us to that *summum bonum*, which our very *nature* implicitly gasps after; and sure *reason* can never jar with *this*, which comes thus as a happy *auxiliary* to succour its impotence; as an infallible *guide* to conduct its steps; and as a glorious *light*, to give it a clear view of what it before blindly groped after. 'Tis a certain indication of *madness*, to *tear* and mischief those things that would be useful to us, to curse and revile a friend, or fly in the face of those whose charity brings them to our aid; and therefore, 'tis most evident, that *reason* must first cease to be Reason, and commence *frenzy*, before 'tis possible it can set it self in

defiance

defiance of those Laws of Christ, which are thus accommodated to its greatest Interests.

and lays a restraint on our Passions.

15. And as the accord is thus observable in the *ultimate*, so is it in the *intermediate* design also. *Reason* had by its twilight discern'd, that that sovereign *bliss* it aim'd at, would never be hit by an unsteady hand; by him, who was perpetually tossed and agitated by his turbulent inordinate appetites. Therefore young men, yet in the heat and ferment of their blood, were solemnly proscrib'd and banisht from the Schools and Lectures of *Philosophy*: therefore lustrations and *Cathairticks* of the mind were sought for, and all endeavour us'd to calm and regulate the *fury*, if not extirpate (which some contended for) the very *being* of the Passions; that so a preparation might be made, *first* for the knowledge, and *then* the attainment of felicity: Now the *Gospel Precepts* have visibly the same *end* and purpose, every one of them expresly singling out some irregular affection to combat and subdue; so that *right Reason*, and *they* are evidently of a *Sect* and Party, insomuch that several of the ancientest Fathers of the Church attributed the excellent documents of *Heathen Philosophers* to the *Divine* λόγος, the reason and essential *Word of God*, which after was *incarnate* upon Earth; and brought auxiliary strengths of *grace* to aid the weaknesses of *nature*. The blessed *Jesus*, whose bare word *checkt the Sea* in its highest fury, and by that miracle attested *his Divinity*, as much exerts himself in silencing the louder tempests, and calming the intestine storms within our breasts. And certainly *Reason* will not quarrel to have been thus reliev'd, it being the *property* only of proud *folly* to chuse rather to *lose* a victory, than *owe* it to the aid of an Allie.

Several duties instanced in, and first of Meekness.

16 From this general view it were easie to descend to observe the exact concurrence of particulars. God loves *a reasonable service*, and has so temper'd his commands, that every act of Obedience we perform may be so qualified, and gain unto its votaries the *Elogium* promis'd in the Law of *Moses*, *Deut.* 4. 9. *Surely this People is a wise and understanding People.* And first, that the command of *Meekness* is a most *rational Precept*, can never be doubted by any, who remember but the common definition of *Anger*, that it is *Furor brevis*, and sure 'tis very reasonable not to be mad; and he that has observ'd the unmanly transportations of that wild passion, how that the first violence it offers is to the man within him, will certainly think it the interest, not only of his *Religion*, but common prudence, and right *Reason* to suppress it. And the like is to be said of the more solemn *phrenzy* of deep malice and deliberate *Revenge*, where the fury wants the allay of being transient and short liv'd, is embodied into Complexion and Temper, and grows inveterate into Nature. *Anger* indeed is a *fire*, and he that touches it, though but lightly, will find it *scorch* him: But the malicious lays himself as it were to *roast* at it; prolongs and spins out his own *Torment*, as if he meant to anticipate his *punishment* in his very crime, and commence his *Hell* here, *in unquenchable fire.* Truly no *sin* does more represent that state of horror to which it tends; it gives a man not only a certain *title*, but an ample *earnest*, pays him part in hand of those dismal wages. This was so well understood, even by the *Heathens*, that we see the *Poets* knew not how more *emphatically* to describe the future *torment* of an envious and malicious person, than by the representation of his *sin*. *Prometheus's Vultur* begins her quarry in this life; every malignant *Thought*, every spightful *Wish* preys upon his *heart* that harbours it: every revengeful project puts him in the pangs of labour, till it be brought forth; and when it is, it commonly rebounds so mischievously upon the Parent, that the birth seems like that of *Agrippina*, when she bare *Nero* that murder'd her. And surely not only *Reason*, but common *sense* will say this is a state to be detested, and consequently must give its suffrage to those Laws of Meekness and Charity, which are the only expedients to prevent it. *Peace* is deservedly reckon'd among the *highest blessings* of Communities, and sure it has a proportionable value in every single member of those greater bodies, it being that which is indispensibly requisite to the enjoying of any other good. A *War* we know interrupts at once all the *profits* and *pleasures* of a Nation: And this hostile *temper* in a man's mind does the very same, and like *Choler* in the Stomach, takes off all *gust* of the most delightful things, and so becomes a *Hell* in the *Pœna damni*, as well as that of *Sense*: And then how absurd an impatience is it, for men to think every the slightest injury from another insupportable, and yet heap such heavy pressures upon themselves? Like froward *Children* roar out for the least touch from *another* hand, yet knock and batter *themselves* without complaint; as if their only contention were, that they may be the sole *Authors* of their own *Calamity?* And that which adds yet more, if it be possible to add to so vast a folly, is, that *revenge* never repairs any *Injury*: If I have been reproacht or defam'd, 'tis not the wounding of my enemy's body that will

 heal

heal my fame; I may by that means help to spread the Libel, by inviting many to enquire the cause of our quarrel; but that is no *Medium* to prove him a Slanderer, the world being too well acquainted with the nature of revenge, to imagine it an argument of his innocency that acts it: So far it is from being such, that it gives a most violent presumption of guilt, according to that notable *observation* of the *Historian*, *Convitia spreta exolescunt, si irascare, agnita videntur.* In like manner, suppose me hurt in my body, *retaliation* brings no *balm* to my sores, my pains abate not by his having the like or greater; nor would my wounds *fester the less*, though his should *gangrene.* So if I am indamag'd in my goods, I may contrive to repay him that ill turn, and yet not recover my own loss; and generally the spightful spoils that are made, are of that nature. 'Tis true, the Law may in some cases repair the injur'd person; but then that is owing to the justice of the *Law*, not to the malice of the *Plaintiff*: For he that sues upon the naked intuition of recovering his *right*, without any aspect of *revenge* on the invader, has as fully the benefit of the *Law* (and indeed none can innocently have it otherwise) and then to what serves the vindicative humour, what increment or advantage can the superaddition of his revenge bring him in? 'Tis sure in all these instances it often does the quite contrary, plunges him in farther troubles and dangers; and when all this is consider'd, we may certainly pronounce *Christ*'s Precept of Meekness partakes as well of the *Serpent* as the *Dove*, is as well *prudent* as *innocent.* Nor is this *Conclusion* at all shaken by that *Objection*, which men make from the danger of inviting more injuries and affronts by this tameness: For first, suppose there were truth in it; that hazard could not balance the many certain mischiefs, which have been evinc'd inseparably to follow the contrary temper: And it were certainly less penal to endure multitudes of light and transient *Abuses*, than those far more uneasie ways of *redress*, which mens revenges suggest to them; and then 'twill be perfectly reasonable, *of these two evils to chuse the less.* As for the greater and more important violations, there are legal ways, which may prove redress in some cases, or prevention in others. He that is slandered or impoverished, may take a course to clear his *Innocence*, or recover his *goods*; he that is hurt or maim'd, though he is uncapable of reparations, yet the Law provides for his future security, by awarding such *penalties*, as may discourage the *offender* from repeating the *violence*. And to these aids a man may resort with these *Proviso*'s, *first*, that he abstract from them all design of *Revenge*; and *secondly*, that the *matter* be of *weight*; and certainly, he that by these *legal means* cannot be secur'd, can be much less so by any *private attempt* of his own. For he that despiseth the coercive *power* of Laws, will much more contemn the *enmity* of a single person. The only difficulty in this case is, when a state is in such a confusion, that there is no lawful Judicature to appeal to; but that implies so many sadder miseries, than the want of such a redress amounts to, that every man may patiently enough cast this into the heap of greater evils; and not consider that one pressure, when so much weightier calamity exacts his grief: But sure the *suspension of Law* in this particular, does no more *qualifie* a private person to be his own *Revenger*, than it invests him in any other part of *Authority*; and he may with as good right place himself on the Bench, and become a *Judge* in *other* mens causes, as thus become both *Judge* and *Executioner* in his *own*.

An Objection against it answered. 17. But in the *last* place, the ground of this Objection seems weak and sandy; for that meekness is not the way to expose a man, generally speaking, to more suffering; 'tis possible indeed, through the barbarity of some few insulting *Cowards*, who love to vapour *good cheap*, that they may trample on those who give least resistance; but this is not the common bent of *humane Nature* (which ought to be the measure in this case) we find men usually exasperated by *opposition*, who are calm'd and appeas'd by *gentleness*. *Anger* is not of the nature of that monstrous *fire* the *Historian* tells us of, which *nothing but blows could extinguish*. It is the *observation* of the wisest of men, that *a soft answer turneth away wrath*, and mens *Passions* are like *Bullets*, which batter the walls which stand inflexible, but fall harmlesly into Wool or Feathers; and I doubt not common experience will attest it, that none do generally fall under fewer of these storms, than they, who are thus prepar'd to bear them. Let a meek and an angry person cast up their accounts together, and compare the number of affronts and contumelies they have met with, and I believe the *odds* will be as *great*, as between *Saul*'s thousands and *David*'s ten thousands. 'Tis certain that the return made to the first injury provokes a new one; men being so partial to themselves, that he who receives a harm by way of *retaliation*, never reflects on his own first guilt, but looks on it as a naked *injury*, and so pursues his Revenge, which has again the same effect on the other, and so this *wildfire* runs round, till it have set all in a *flame*, made the saddest

dest vastations, not only in mens *minds*, but their outward *concernments* too, in the many fatal outrages, which these eager contentions occasion; all which would be avoided by a meek disregard of the first provocation: So that although some injuries may fall upon the passive man, yet infallibly there would be no broils and quarrels, which are alone the great accumulators and multipliers of injuries; which alone demonstrates how unjustly *meekness* is charg'd with so much as an accidental production of them, and vindicate that *precept of Christ*, which has fallen under so much, not only *cavil*, but *scorn*; it appearing, that to abstain from revenge, and refer the hazards of that to God's providence (which is the importance of his command *to turn the cheek*) is the greatest, even moral *security* against *violence*, and so approves our *Lawgiver* (in this so decried particular) to be as well the *wonderful Counseller*, as the *Prince of Peace*.

18. In the next place, if we weigh the *precept* of Humility and lowliness in the *balance* of sober discourse, we shall certainly find it hold a *just weight*. Indeed *pride* is nothing but *deceit*, a mere cheat and delusion, and so every man can discern it in another; we *there* are able to trace the windings of this *Serpent*, and say, *this* man thinks himself more wise, *this* more learned, a *third* more holy than he is: Yet alas! in our own breasts, we discern not the *abuse*, suffer him to perswade *us* what he but promised to our *first Parents*, that we are *as Gods*, something so super-excellent, that all should reverence and adore: And herein we take him at his word, never suspect these glorious *Attributions* may be no more than *Complement* or *Flattery*; or what is no less obvious, *derision* and *scorn*. To a considering man 'twould be a shrewd *presumption* against whatever *pride* suggests, that 'tis attended always by *self-love*, which is, as it were, the *common setter* to all those cheats which circumvent and fool us: But there want not also more convincing proofs of its deceit and insincerity. When e'er we overween and believe well of our selves, it is in contemplation of some *imaginary*, or else *real* good; somewhat a man has not, or somewhat that he has: If we do it upon the former account, that is undeniably a gross *delusion*; a kind of *Deceptio visus*, a filling the eye with fantastick *Aerial* Images, which have no solid Being: And God knows, such *Phasms*, such Apparitions are most of those *excellencies* which men applaud in themselves; things conjured up by the *Magick* of a strong imagination, and are only seen within that *Circle* in which the *Enchanter* stands. And though *Satan* be the *grand Master of this black Art*, yet his *Pupils* are now grown so dexterous, that he seldom needs to be call'd in; our own partialities and fondnesses to our selves, are abundantly sufficient for the purpose. But if in the *second* place, we suppose the things to be *really* existent in us, yet *pride* runs us upon an *other error*, no less dangerous than the *former*; for it betrays us to mistake the true *owner* of them, emboldens us to set our own mark upon those *rich Wares*, in whose acquist we have not been so much as *Factors*; God is the one great Author and Proprietor of all, that is, or can be valuable in us, to his Providence, or his Grace, we owe all the accomplishment of our outward, or inward man, and though he allows us the *use* and benefit of them, yet the *glory* is a special *royalty*, which (as the gold or silver Mines of a Nation) is reserved to his *Crown*, an incommunicable piece of his *regality*. And how wofully does our *Pride* befool us, when it brings us in such false *Inventories* of our goods, makes us dream our selves rich by another's wealth? like *children*, that *call every thing theirs which looks splendidly*, or the mad *Athenian* celebrated by *Horace* for his happy phrenzy, that *resolv'd all the Ships and Wares his own that came into the Cities Harbour*: But how more sadly does it betray us, when it thus puts us upon the invasion of *his* propriety, who is not, as the impotent *Monarchs* of the Earth, unable to assert his own *rights*, but can certainly *vindicate* himself to our *confusion*? against whom no rebellion can be any longer prosperous, than he willingly permits it, and who has solemnly avowed, *he will not give his glory to another*. And when our *pride* makes us thus both ridiculous and miserable, when it seduces us, not only into the folly of *Children*, and extravagancies of *Lunaticks*, but at once into the guilt of bold, and punishment of improsperous *Rebels*; certainly Reason can never become its *advocate*, or put in any *demur* to that sentence, which excludes so treacherous a *guest* out of mens' hearts; which is the sole aim of those *laws of Humility* which *Christ* has given us.

Secondly, of Humility.

19. Nor will the precepts of *Temperance* and *Purity* find any *worse doom* at this *Bar*, the contrary *vices* being such indignities and contumelies unto humane nature, as can never find any *countenance* from this Supreme part of it. 'Tis the prerogative of our Reason, that it discriminates us *from*, and elevates us *above* beasts: Nor can it ever be brought to resign this so glorious a privilege, assent to the admission of those brutish appetites, which would over-run the *Soul*, level its *superior* with its *inferior* faculties; confound the distinction of *rational* and *sensitive*, and in a word, render the *Beast* so

Thirdly of Temperance and Chastity.

ravenous as to eat up the *Man*. Yet thus it is in those sordid sins of *intemperance* and *uncleanness*, unless perhaps they are so much worse than *bestial*, that I wrong the generality of the brutes in the comparison, it being only some few of them, the very *beasts* of the *beasts*, that are guilty of any such excesses; for generally their *appetites* do not transgress the regular ends of *nature*, they know no such disease as *surfeiting*, but eat to satisfie *hunger*, and couple at such seasons as best tend to preserve their kind. And then 'tis to be consider'd, how base, how degenerous a descent it is for us to stoop, not only below our *own* nature, but *theirs*; what a *solitude* these vices reduce us to, that not so much as the nobler sort of *beasts* will bear us *company*; we must wander upon the *mountains* to court a *Goat*, we must rake the *mire* to find a *Swine*, before we can furnish our selves with any *associates*: And sure all this is so open an *hostility* against Reason, that it can by no means be her *interest* to abet it. Ask her whether she would be *prest to death* with *loads of meat*, whether she would be *drown'd* in *floods of drink*, whether she would be *suffocated* with the *noisom vapours of putrefaction* and *rottenness*, and the *answer* she gives to these, tells you her sense of *Gluttony*, *Drunkenness* and *Uncleanness*. Alas! she suffers for them the most barbarous outrages, is invaded not only in her *authority*, but her very *Being*, and therefore, even upon the so celebrated principle of self preservation, must muster all her forces to vindicate the injury and defend her self. And then certainly *Christ's commands* of *sobriety* and *purity* must needs be entertained with all *alacrity* and *gladness*, as an accession of *strength* to her party, an *aid* to assist her in that just and necessary *War*.

Fourthly, of Liberality.

20. And as *Reason* thus pronounces against the sins of the *flesh*, so in the next place does it certainly against those of the *World*. *Mammon* himself will not be able to bribe this *Judge*, but when *Christ's Precept* of *Charity* and *Liberality* comes before this *Tribunal*, it will infallibly be, not only *acquitted*, but *magnified* and *applauded*, be call'd from the *Bar* to the *Bench*, commissioned like the *Jews*, Hest. 9. *To bear rule over them that hated them*: to dissipate at once the wealth, and the covetousness of the *worldling*; have the *keys* put into its hand, that it may have free access to his *Coffers*; this certainly must be the event of this trial, for 'tis confessedly the part of *Reason* to dispose every thing to those *uses*, which are most *proper* and *advantageous*, such as may bring in most *real benefit* to the owner. Now what other employment of *wealth* is there (after competent accommodations are provided) which can contribute to a man's *felicity*? If it be laid out like the *rich man's* in the Gospel, *in delicious fare*, or *Purple* and *fine Linen*; certainly it makes no least approach towards it. First, for excessive fare, if a man be *not excessive* too in the eating, what does he *enjoy* of it? *Meat* has no natural propriety to the *eye*, and can make no impressions of pleasure there; but if he be *voracious* and *intemperate*, 'tis then so far from making him *happy*, that it dejects him into the *forlorn condition*, even now mentioned, sets him at odds with his *Reason*, his very *manhood*, nay, I may add with his very *sense too*; the displicencies that he receives by the consequences of his excess, far out-weighing all that is grateful in it. This is well describ'd by the *Wise man*, *Ecclus*. 31. 19.

Vanity of Pride in Apparel.

21. As for the *gaiety of Apparel*, that can never in sober judging be thought any advantage; 'tis that which only *youth* and *folly* puts a value upon, and as we out-grow the one, so do we the other: All that is convenient in Cloaths is as well, nay, better provided for without it: A rich *Suit* is only *heavier*, not *warmer* than a plain; and it is a kind of prodigy to see *how heavily Vanity*, which is in it self so *light*, sits upon some men; who are content, even to make themselves *Porters*, so their *Taylors* may lay on the *burthen*! And thus in many other instances the fineness of Cloaths destroys the ease, so that it often *helps* men to pain, but can never *rid* them of any; the body may be languishing and infirm under the most splendid cover: *Herod's royal apparel* secures him not from being *eaten with worms*; and *Lazarus his Ulcers*, would have been never the less *painful*, though they had been *wrapt in* Dives *his fine Linen*.

Of too great a retinue or number of Servants.

22. Or if the *wealth* be laid out on any other part of *that* the World calls *greatness*, as an *honourable retinue*, *Troops of Attendants*, and the like; the return will be no less *empty*: Multitudes of unprofitable *Servants* being a great *burthen*, but no degree of *advantage*. Alas! does my meat relish ever the better, because my table is surrounded with *waiters*? Or when I go out, does my *train of followers* make the air the more refreshing to me, does not rather the dust they raise make it less, annoy and stifle me? As for *matter of business*, the number of *Servants* tends rather to hinder, than advance it; daily experience attesting, that in crouds of domesticks, every one of them thinks his idleness will be hid: The *care* of *doing*, and the *guilt of omitting* is transferr'd from one to another, and none has any farther thought, than how he may quit himself, either of the *burthen*, or the *blame*; so that upon the final account, all

that

that accrues to a *master* by the *greatness of his family*, is the encrease of his care in the regimen of it: A great deal of vigilance and circumspection being requir'd to keep it in any tolerable *order*; and if it be not so kept, his house becomes a *wilderness*, and himself a *prey* to the beasts he feeds: The licentiousness of the servant redounding more ways than one to the damage of the master.

Of Prodigality and Covetousness.

23. If we should now proceed more *minutely* to every other *single expence*, which *vanity* and *pride* suggests, we should certainly find the like success of our inquest; nothing of *real felicity*, but on the contrary the vanity so interwoven, and incorporate with *vexation of spirit*, that 'tis impossible to sever them: So that *thus* to employ ones riches, is rather to *suffer*, than *enjoy* them. But if we suppose a man on the other side such a *reverer of his wealth*, that he dares not *employ* it at all, unless it be at the *Bank*, for the bringing in of more, that keeps it as men do beasts reserv'd for breed, manumit them from all work but that of propagation; such a person is surely of all others, the farthest from receiving any advantage by it: He converts it from a *servant* into a *tyrant*, and sad experience shews us the calamity of such a transmutation. It has been always held the severest *treatment* of *slaves* and *malefactors*, *damnari ad metalla*, force them to dig in mines; now this is the *covetous man's lot*, from which he is never to expect a release, as being his own remorseless, and more than *Egyptian task-master*: And the parallel holds too in the gainlesness as well as laboriousness of the work: Those wretched *creatures* buried in *earth* and darkness, were never the *richer* for all the *ore* they digg'd; no more is the *insatiate miser*, he has no power to *dispose* of any of his *acquists*; and though he calls them *his*, yet alas! he possesses them no otherwise than a *prisoner* does his *goal*, a *mad-man* his *chains*, they are only instruments of his *thraldom*, and the getting more, serves only to add more weight to his shackles; and certainly *wealth* can be no way worse dispos'd, than thus to buy so base a *servitude*.

Charity best imploys our Wealth.

24. And now, since neither the *luxurious* spending, nor the *covetous* keeping, can advantage us one step towards any thing that can be call'd *happy*; but do on the contrary *engage* us upon toil and *misery*: *Wealth* seems to be a very oppressive *burthen*, such as we can neither *cast off*, nor safely *bear*; and truly so it is till *charity* comes in to our aid; which, as the proper *element of wealth*, renders that *light* which gravitates elsewhere, and as the *elixir* unto *metals* transforms them into *gold*, stamps *purity* and *price* upon them: By freely giving, endows the *donor* with whatever he bestows, enriches *him*, and what is more, enriches *wealth* it self. Without this *art of using*, and disposing our estates, we are those *Indians* who change their gold for glass; that silly *fisherman*, who having found a *mass of ambergrease*, employed it to the *liquoring of his boots*; are foolish to the height of *Midas* in the fable, who being promis'd to have whatever he would *wish*, made his *demand*, that every thing he toucht might presently be *gold*, and run the hazard that he did of being *starv'd* by our unhappy affluence: Men say indeed that *gold by preparation* becomes a *sovereign cordial*, but certainly it never does rejoyce the heart so much as when charity is the *chymist*; the *poor man's hand* is the best *limbeck* to extract this *magistery* and *tincture*, the *flames of love* will really perform those *miracles*, they of the furnace boast of; and would they employ themselves in this *laboratory*, they would find the *omnipotent efficacy* they dream of, sooner in this way of *dissipating*, than in all their *arts*, or rather fancies of generating gold. 'Tis certainly a most generous and enlivening pleasure, which results from a *seasonable liberality*. When I see a man struggling with *want*, his very spirit as well as body stooping under the pressure, if I then relieve him, the *human nature* within me, which is common to us both, does by a kind of *sympathetick motion* exult and raise up it self, but if I have any *piety*, that must do it much more; for as the *former* shew'd me *my own image* in my poor *brother*, so *this* shews me *God's*: And how transcendent a satisfaction must it be, to have thus rescued him who bears so divine an impress, to have paid some part of *gratitude* to my Creator for my own *being*, by making my self, in my low sphere, the giver or preserver of that life, which he first breathed into another? *This*, and this only is the *way* to raise a *felicity* out of *wealth*; and surely since the attaining of *happiness* is the one grand *pursuit* of our *reason*, that must even before it has subjected it self to the *faith of Christ*, give assent to the *prudence of his command* in *this* as well as the *former* instances.

Reasonableness of suffering for Righteous-ness sake.

25. But there remains a *precept* of our *Saviour's* allied to this; which seems by no means to *comport* and *hold a correspondence* with the dictates of *right reason*, the *taking up the cross*, and *suffering for righteousness sake*; which contradicts the fundamental Law of *self-preservation*, and the great end of being, felicity and happiness. But this *suggestion*, how specious soever it appear, is utterly fallacious; for 'tis no good consequence, that because *reason* aims at our being happy, therefore it forbids us all *voluntary sufferings*,

ings, since that the case may be so set, that *such a suffering* may be the fairest *medium* left us to our *happiness*. 'Tis a known rule, that *of two evils the least is to be chosen*; and the election of the lesser ill, though it be no *absolute*, yet is a *comparative* good; and its *attainment*, as far as the necessity of our affairs permits, is our *felicity*: And Reason can provide no farther. Now this is the estate of the present instance: *Two evils* are propos'd, a *natural* and a *moral*; the natural, though in it self to be averted, yet much inferior to the moral; and then *reason* soon resolves the *Dilemma*, that the *natural is to be chosen*: All that can be question'd in this affair is, *Whether reason define the moral evil to be the greater*; but this can bear no long dispute with any, who consider but the *nature of reason*, which being seated in the *upper soul* of a man, is no way concern'd in those *ills*, which make their impression on the *sensitive part*: But *moral* ills strike higher, invade the *mind*, cloud the *reason*, nay, often depose it from its regimen, as is too frequently exemplified in the force of vicious habits; and therefore, by how much our *reason* is superior to our *sense*, so much are those to be accounted the *greatest evils*, which assault that nobler part of us. This certainly will now be the *determination* of Reason, if she may be permitted the freedom of her vote: For thus was it formerly, where she bare the most sway, and uncontrouled rule; the wisest and best considering of *human*, as well as *divine authors*, having establisht it as an undoubted *aphorism*, that *honesty is to be preferr'd before both gainful and pleasant*: So that nothing renders a man so *deplorable*, as that which violates his *integrity*; nay, they have generally gone higher, exhorted men to *become voluntiers in Virtue's warfare, not to suspend their sufferings, till they were forc'd out by the competition of a crime, but offer themselves free oblations*. Thus to suffer for ones *country*, or ones *friend*, was thought so worthy, so *heroick* a thing, that *noble* and *ingenuous spirits* were *emulous* of it: And it was so stated a case, that *Epictetus* forbids a man, on such an occasion to consult with the *Oracle*, whether he should do it or no, it being *necessary* to be done, whatever ill success or ruin be predicted, ὅτε ὁ θάνατος σημαίνεται, ἢ πήρωσις μέρους σώματος, ἢ φυγή, and how serious they were in these *persuasions*, some of them have *practically* evidenced, as having suffered very considerable pressures, nay, *death* it self, rather than they would bow to the *predominant vices* of their age, or omit the occasion of *eminent virtue*. *Aristides* would be just in spight of the *Ostracism*; *Regulus* observant of his *oath* made to a *faithless enemy*, though *death* and *torment* attended the *performance*. *Lycurgus*, to perpetuate to his citizens the benefit of his *good laws*, as subtilly designs *perpetual banishment* unto himself, as others use to contrive for *honour* and for *empire* there. *Codrus* redeems the safety of his *army* with his own *death*: *Curtius* makes himself a *martyr* for his *country*, and *Socrates* in the stricter sense becomes one for his *God*; laid down his *life* in attestation of that most *fundamental truth*, and leading *article of faith*, πιστεύειν εἰς ἕνα θεόν, the *belief of one God*. And yet we find not that *those times*, which were so *ill* as to shed his *blood*, were so *bad* as to defame his *memory*; he's not recorded either as *fool* or *hypochondriack*, nor have his *sufferings* struck him out of the list of *Philosophers*; but he stands there the more conspicuously in those *bloody characters*; and however the credit of the *Oracle* may be otherwise disparaged, it never was on this account, that it had declared *Socrates* to be the *wisest of men*. And yet both he and the rest, had either *none*, or very *imperfect* confus'd apprehensions of a future *reward*, when they engag'd on present suffering, and death it self: So that we might be tempted to imagine, that some strange change and *transmutation* has now befaln *virtue*, that it has put on so much a *distant* appearance from its *ancient* self, that the accession of new obligations, and higher hopes, should absolve, avert, and utterly dispirit us; insomuch that what was constancy in a *Heathen*, should be folly in a *Christian*. Certainly this is a *Metamorphosis* of our own making, we look through deforming *optick-glasses*, such as our *avarice*, or effeminate *sensualities* convey into our hands, which give not only *strange* and ghastly, but withal *ridiculous shapes*; but if we would consult our *reason*, that would shew us things in their *proper forms*. Virtue and Reason are both the same they were so many hundred years ago, and where the *object* and the *faculty* admit of no *mutation*, 'tis impossible there should really be any such *variable appearance*. If *Socrates* were so zealous for the *One God*, that he chose rather to relinquish his *life*, than to consent to, or but connive at the *profane rivalry of Polytheism*, and yet be no fool, certainly we may as securely transcribe his copy: And though the particular article may not be the same, yet if it be any thing wherein virtue is concern'd, the cause is no less warrantable: He that suffers for a practical point, is no more a prodigal of his pains, than he that lays them out on the highest *speculative*. The *Commandments* may have as good *martyrs* as the *Creed*; for the same *authority* has requir'd our *obedience* to the *one*, that exacts our *faith* of the *other*.

Nor

Nor is there any neceſſity of *Heathen* or *Jewiſh* tribunal, to convert our ſufferings to *martyrdom*; we may receive that crown from the hands of thoſe that own the ſame faith with us. Thoſe that ſay with the moſt ſeeming vehemence, *Let the Lord be glorified*, may yet hate and caſt out their brethren for his name's ſake, *Iſa. 66. 5.* He that tells me I fear not *God ſo much* as he, may yet perſecute me for honouring the *king more*; and my *blood* pour'd out upon that account becomes an *acceptable ſacrifice* to him, who has commanded my ſubjection to the *higher powers*. He who calls Chriſt his *head*, may yet rend and tear his body: And if I love its communion ſo well, as to take my ſhare in the *maſſacre*, I approach toward that dignity and comfort St. *Paul* ſo glories in, of *filling up that which is behind, of the afflictions of Chriſt in my fleſh, for his Body's ſake, which is the Church*, Col. 1. 24. He that mulcts the more *indeliberate* oaths, may yet enjoyn a ſolemn perjury; and if I chooſe he ſhould rather make havock of my *goods*, than my conſcience; my *ſpoils* become not more monuments of his *rapine*, than my *piety*; they plead my innocence before him, who *will not hold him guiltleſs, that taketh his name in vain:* And how profanely ſoever my *wealth* is diſpos'd by him that ſeizes it, 'tis accounted to me as caſt into the *treaſury*; and ſo 'tis poſſible I may at once vie with the *rich men* in the greatneſs of the oblation, and with the *poor widow* too, in that higher circumſtance of its being all. In ſumm, the opportunities of *martyrdom* are not reſtrained to thoſe points, wherein *Chriſtians* differ from *Jews* or *Heathens*, but extend to all wherein we Chriſtians differ from our rule, the commands of our bleſſed Maſter. If I ſuffer for my *conſtancy* to any of them, I have certainly my place in *God's martyrology*, as well as if I had fallen under any of the *ten perſecutions*. God was not ſo partial to the *primitive Chriſtians*, as to allow them the *monopoly* and encloſure of that dignity; if they, as our *elder brethren*, had a *double portion*, yet there is ſtill a *child's part* left for every one of us, enough to teſtifie our *legitimation*, and ſecure us from the brand of *baſtardy*, Heb. 12. 'Twas St. *Paul's* indefinite affirmation, and all Times ſince have borne witneſs to the truth of it; *That all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution.* Some *unfaſhionable virtues* there have been in every age, which have whetted, if not the *ſwords*, yet the *tongues* of men: And thoſe that happen not to fall under *Abel's* perſecution, muſt not hope to eſcape that of *Iſaac:* If they meet with no *Cain* to *kill*, they will undoubtedly with an *Iſhmael* to *mock* them. But in what dreſs ſoever our *ſufferings* appear, a good cauſe diveſts them of their *frightful ſhape*, pulls off the ugly *vizard*, and ſhews us a *beauty* that lay there conceal'd; and that not only to the eye of our faith, but our reaſon too. *Fortitude* was a *virtue* before *Chriſtianity* had a name in the world, and the very inſtinct of our *nature whiſpers* within us, the baſeneſs of being baffled out of a truth or virtue; yet ſuch a deſpicable *coward* is every man that wants this *paſſive valour*, without which the *active* muſt find another name; rage or frenzy it may be, in ſome perhaps natural *courage*, or ſanguineneſs of temper in others, but true valour it is not, if it knows not as well to *ſuffer*, as to *do*. That *mind* is truly great, and only that which ſtands above the *power* of all *extrinſick violence*, which keeps it ſelf a diſtinct *principality*, independent upon the outward man, ſo that it is not ſubjected to its fate; that can be *free*, when the body is faſt *bound* in miſery and iron, *ſound* and *healthy*, when that *groans* under torture, and is never more *ſtrong* and *vital*, than when that *languiſhes* and *expires*; and this is ſo deſirable, ſo tranſcendent a *privilege*, as *Reaſon* cannot but *aſpire* to: And this is it to which this excellent *precept* of Chriſt advances us, when we thus *ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake*; our minds are all *light*, what *darkneſs* ſoever involve our exterior part, and this like *Goſhen* exempt and ſecure, when that falls under all the plagues of *Egypt*.

Rewards and threatnings great motives to Obedience.

26. And what Reaſon thus embraces for it ſelf, 'tis not imaginable that it ſhould reject, becauſe 'tis richly clad; that the race ſhould ſeem the more tedious, becauſe there is a crown within view; or that the glorious *rewards* our Chriſtianity propoſes to our conſtancy, ſhould be eſteemed as *menaces* and *threats*, temptations to deſert or turn apoſtates. No certainly, Reaſon cannot diſpute, and make an *inference* ſo utterly *illogical*, but will rather uſe it as an *enforcement* of its former *concluſion*, eſtabliſh it the more firm and immoveable, by having the *baſis* thus enlarged, having *reward* added to *virtue*, and happineſs entail'd on *duty*. If in the competition between two evils, *Reaſon* pronounce the *leſſer eligible*, much more will ſhe reſolve, when the conteſt is 'twixt *good* and *evil*, the greateſt evil and the greateſt good; and chooſe that *excellence* which though *ſuperlative* in it ſelf, is more endear'd and heightned by compariſon. If I violate my *reaſon*, if I renounce *virtue*, though bare and naked, then ſurely I do it yet more when ſhe is thus *accompliſht* and adorn'd; when *beautified* on purpoſe to allure the *eye*, and take the *heart*. When over and above the poſitive donation of

happiness, she adds a rescue and release from *misery*, and equally obliges by the distant prospects of a Hell and Heaven. So that not only the *Gospel promises*, but even *menaces* and *threats* become a *weapon* in the hand of *reason*, when she stands upon her *guard*, and fights for *virtue*. If *sin* present it self as my *protector* from a *temporal* calamity, *reason* will tell me hence, that the proffer is insidious, it exposes me to that which is *infinitely worse*, than what it pretends to save me from; and that not only in the former respect of guilt, but in that of punishment also. What a cheat is it to keep me out of the *dungeon*, and send me to the *bottomless pit?* to save me from a *temporary fire*, and thereby mark me out as fuel for *eternal flames?* to take me out of *their hands* who can *kill the body*, to put me into *his*, who can *destroy both soul and body in hell? Reason* tells me, I am to abhor the *turpitude* and *foulness* of a crime; and it tells me too, I am to dread the *misery* and smart of it also. It would not have me wallow in the mire, though it were *safe*, much less when it is full of *asps* and *vipers*, which will infallibly sting me to death. It cries out with *Joseph*, *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* And it cries out with *Isaiah* too, *Who can dwell with everlasting fire?* In a word, by the domestick native *light* of the *candle of the Lord*, set up within our *breast*, it shews the ugliness of *sin*; and shews it too, by the affrightful dismal *blaze* of those *unquenchable flames* it kindles. Thus by the different *arguments* of terror and endearment, of love and fear, of interest and duty, *reason* asserts this scorn'd, decryed, neglected *precept*: Take her as mere *Paynim*, abstracting from the expectation of reward or punishment; or take her as a *Proselyte* to Christ, contemplating his promises and threats, if there be *honesty*, or if there be *religion*, in either instance the soul must still conclude, that *affliction is to be chosen rather than iniquity.*

Reasonableness of Self-denial. 27. And if it be reasonable thus to *resist even unto blood*, *striving against sin*, if *reason* blow the *trumpet*, sound the *alarm* to this solemn *war*, then surely it prescribes something of *martial discipline*, to prepare and dispose us for those *combats*. No expert general will bring a company of raw untrain'd men into the *field*, but will by little bloodless skirmishes, instruct them in the manner of the *fight*, teach them the ready managery of their *weapons*; and of this sort are all those *voluntary self-denials*, and lighter austerities which Christianity commends to us, which become necessary not simply for themselves, but as instruments towards a higher end. The military fame the *Romans* had in the world, was atchieved by the exact discipline of their camps, enuring their soldiers to labour and hardship. And, as *Tacitus* tells us, when a *long peace* had slackned the reins of discipline, that *active humour*, which was wont to be spent on the enemy, recoil'd, and flew in the face of their commanders, begat nothing but *mutinies* and disorders; and certainly 'twill be the same in our *Christian warfare*, if we abandon our selves to ease and sloth, never attempt to wrestle with a difficulty, but keep our selves in the posture the *Israelites* camp was in, at *Moses*'s descent from the mount, *eating and drinking*, *and rising up to play*; our appetites will grow licentious and insolent, past our controul and guidance. If we treat them with such an indulgence as is recorded of *David* to *Adonijah*, never say so much as, *Why hast thou done this?* 'Tis not to be expected but they will rebel, though a *Solomon* sit in the throne. For alas! how is it imaginable, that he who never denied himself any, the *smallest* or *most trifling pleasure* he had a mind to, shall on a sudden deny *all in the gross?* He who has projected *many*, but never wav'd one opportunity of shewing his *wit*, how shall he find in his heart to become a *fool for Christ?* He that has gratified his *palate* with all that pretends to be gustful to it, how shall he descend to the *bread of affliction?* or he that never tried to miss a meal, how will he entertain the unwelcome contrariety of not knowing where to get one? He who has never abated any thing of the utmost *pomp* he could reach, how will he brook the want of necessaries? or from his house ceil'd with *cedar*, and painted with *vermilion*, be content with his *Saviour*'s lot, *not to have where to lay his head?* In short, how shall he who never could pare off any of the *excrescences*, the mere *vanities* and *gayeties* of an estate, part with it *all*; or lay down that *life for Christ's sake*, from which he never substracted one smallest *pleasure? Suffering* is a thing to which the *sensitive* part of us has an innate *aversion*, and *aversions* are not to be subdued at once, but by gentle and easie *degrees*; and custom must have introduc'd a second nature, before that original part of our temper will be supplanted. As 'tis therefore highly reasonable for every man to aspire to the dominion of himself, to keep his *affections* within his own *power* and *command*; and though he have no interest at all in the greater, enjoy a sovereignty in the lesser world: So in order to that, 'tis as reasonable to discipline and tame them by some voluntary acts of restraint, like *Hannibal*, sometimes to *pass by that water to*

which

which his thirsts do most importunately invite him: To try by little skirmishes what strength and skill he has, before he runs the fatal hazard of a *battle*: To deny himself in the lesser instances, that so when the greater come, they may not have the disadvantage of uncouthness, and perfect strangeness to enhanse their difficulty. And this must certainly be acknowledged *reasonable*, or else we must condemn almost all the received rules of *humane transactions*, which generally have this for their *groundwork*, that men must pass through the first *principles* and lowest *rudiments* of any art, before they can arrive at its height. Men serve apprenticeships to Trades, and think not themselves the first day masters of their craft; we advance in *learning* by leisurable and slow steps, and skip not from the *ABC* to the *Metaphysicks*: And certainly the skill of *Christian suffering* is not the easiest of all *Trades* or *Sciences*; but will require some time of *Initiation*, many repeated Trials and Essays to bring us into an acquaintance with it: To convince our *understandings*, and persuade our *wills*, that *to lose our lives is to save them; and to be faithful unto the death*, is the best way *to gain a crown of life*.

And all other instances of our Duty:

28 If I should now proceed to every other *precept* of Christ, and examine it by the *rules* of *sober discourse*, we should infallibly find them so rational, as befits the Laws of *him* who is the *eternal reason*; but having made these *Essays* in some of the most oppos'd instances, I shall presume these may pass as the *representatives* of *all* the rest; and the acquittal these have received at the Tribunal of Reason, virtually involve them all.

Attested best by Experience.

29. And now since both *Conscience* and *Reason* have pronounc'd the same of Christ's *Laws*, that *Pilate* did of his *Person*, that *they find in them no fault at all*; methinks *Judges* should have the same *privilege* that is allowed to *private Men*, that *in the mouth of two every word may be establish'd*: But if any man be so scrupulous as not to rest in the sentence of less than a *Triumvirate*, let him *in God's name* bring in a *third*, and when his vicious *appetites* (which were before excepted to as parties), are set a side, he cannot be distracted in his *choice*, there being but one more that can possibly be call'd in, and that is *Experience*, which being a *Judge*, that himself must create, he cannot fear it should be prejudic'd against him; so that he may entertain full confidence of its *integrity*; and no less may he do of its *ability*, this being the most infallible of humane determinations, such as often corrects the *error* of *speculation*, and shews us the vanity of concluding what is *practicable in matter*, from being *demonstrated in the Scheme* or *Diagram*; the *guidance* of an *illiterate Traveller* in the way that he has gone, being far more useful to a stranger in his journey, than the best *Maps*, and most exact descriptions of *Geographers*. But then it must be indeed *Experience*, and not only some slight and transient Essay. We call not him an *experienc'd Physician*, that has had *one Patient*, or a *Lawyer* that has pleaded *one Cause*. *Experience* is the daughter of *Time*, and is made up of many *successive trials*, as a *habit* is of *multiplied acts*; and to the *verdict* of such an Experience, Christ's Precepts will not fear to stand; let a man put himself into a settled course of *obedience* to them, abstain so long from all *prohibited Commissions*, as may wear out the *rank taste*, wherewith his *palate* has been season'd, and leave it free and disengag'd, and then infallibly, he will find such a *savour* and *sweetness* in those *virtues*, that he will wonder how he came to be cheated into an opinion of their being *bitter* and *unsavory*; and will have no appetite to *return to his Onions and his Garlick*, after he has thus been fed with *Quails* and *Manna*. That this will be the event of this *experiment*, there is all *ground of certainty*, and when the *trial* is once made, so irrefragable an *evidence* will follow, that it will not leave a man the *power to doubt*: Only in the interim so much belief is requisite, as may let him into the *demonstration*, make him set to that practice, from whence he is to reap all this. And if any man be so much a *Sceptick*, as not to have faith enough to put him on the adventure, I should at once for his *conviction* and *punishment*, wish but that he might a while extend the same *distrust* to affairs of *common Life*: Let him doubt whether his meat be savoury, and refuse to eat; whether his *cloaths* be warm, and so *go naked*; whether his *house* be firm, and *lye without doors*: And when he has a while thus smarted under his own *discipline*, let him but apply the *wisdom* he has thus bought to the present *instance*, and it will unquestionably resolve his *scruple*; or if he be still too impatient, to attend the ripening of his own Experience, let him make use of other mens. Let him appeal to any, who has inur'd his neck to Christ's yoke, and ask him whether it be *galling* and *pinching*, or whether it be not *easie*, nay *gracious*. Let him ask one, who by repeated restraints hath subdued and tamed his *natural rage* or *pride*, how he likes the *change*, and undoubtedly he will tell him, 'tis no less happy, than a *calm* is after the noise and danger of a violent *tempest*, or the ease of a broken *imposthume*

hume after the painful gathering and filling of it. Let him ask one, who has divested himself of all his *sensual sins*, whether by their *absence* he now discern not their necessity, and he will tell them, 'tis but the same the primitive *Christians* had of those *beasts skins*, wherein their *persecutors* had clad them, whose only use was by *deforming* to fit them for *devouring*. Let him come to the converted *Mammonist*, and ask him, which he finds the better *treasury*, his own Coffer, or the poor man's Bowels, and he will be able to assure him, he is become much richer by having *less in store*. Let him come to the devout *Ascetick*, and ask him what taste he finds in *Daniel*'s unpleasant *bread*, *Dan.* 10. 3. and he will tell him infinitely more than ever he did in *Dives*'s delicious fare; that cloy'd and surfeited the flesh, this nourishes and supports the spirit. Nay, finally let him come to him, that is actually *suffering for righteousness sake*, and he will exemplifie to him the *beatitude* which Christ has pronounc'd of such: Let him visit *Paul* and *Silas* in the Prison, and he shall hear them *singing*; *Peter*, and the other Apostles after their stripes and beating, and he shall find them *rejoycing*; and *Stephen* amidst the throng of his *murderers* and tempest of their *stones*, and he shall observe him overlooking them all, and entertaining himself with a more pleasant *prospect*, seeing the *Heavens open'd, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God*; and why should not other mens successes animate our endeavours here? In temporal affairs it seldom misses to do it. The trophies of *Miltiades* at *Marathon* distürb'd *Themistocles* his sleeps, till he had rais'd unto himself and *Country* more glorious ones at *Salamine*; *Cesar* while he views *Alexander*'s Image, upbraids his own slackness with the memory of his Conquests, and inspirits himself to great attempts. He that returns with a rich fraight from a *new found land*, encourages others to trade *thither* also: Nay, even a *beggar* speeds not well at an *hospitable door*, but he is able to send *sholes* upon the like hopes: Much less does he that has found a treasure need to use his Oratory to invite partakers; and why then should those few that have made this more precious discovery, be forc'd to monopolize it, as not being able to draw in partners? Yet God knows thus it is; those that hear of no rarity, but they long for it, as *David* after the waters of *Bethlehem*, can yet hear the same *David* cry out, *How sweet the Lord is!* and yet have no curiosity to taste it: Those whom the very name of *Liberty* so captivates, that they sacrifice all that is really valuable to that *Chimera*; can hear the *Apostle speak* of the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*, and yet like hardened *Gally slaves* despise the *Manumission*. Those that hunt after pleasures, till the very pursuit become an insupportable pain, can be told of those *rivers of pleasures*, wherewith God offers to quench their thirst, and yet inflict on themselves the *rich man's torment*, and deny so much as to *dip the tip of their finger* toward the *cooling* their own *flames*. Good God! what strange *infatuation* is this, that while there is so much of vicious *envy* in the world, there should be nothing of *virtuous emulation?* that mens heat and vigour should all spend it self in childish pursuits, and leave them thus cold and stupid to their great and serious concernments? And what remains to him, that ponders this *Epidemick* folly, but to breath out *Moses*'s Wish; *O that men were wise*; or if that be too hopeless a vote, *O that men were not so destructively foolish*; that their rashness and error might be confin'd to their lower interests: And as fools are treated, *be kept from dealing in things of consequence*; that they would not govern their Souls by such an absurd kind of managery, as they will not trust with the meanest of their outward concerns. And if this might be obtained, if this fatal *Oscitancy*, which has benumb'd and frozen them, were but *cast off*, they would then from the report of the *good land*, be animated to their *journey*; and rather chuse to make the concurrent testimonies of others arguments to encourage them, than *leave* them as Hand-writings to *appeal*, or Witnesses to *condemn* them. And he that shall thus borrow other men's *experience*, with this design of *copying it out*, and lays it as a foundation for his own, thereby possesses himself of one of the greatest *advantages* of the *Communion of Saints*; kindles himself at their *fire*, till he grows bright and hot at it; combines his *flame* with theirs, and so encreases the ardors of them both; follows example, till himself grows exemplary, and in one act *receives*, and *gives*. But he that thus sets out, must remember, that it is more than the journey of one day he has to go; he must not think (as I said before) that every little *superficial attempt* is that experience, which he is in quest of: He that thus fancies, will be expos'd to a very dangerous deceit, for 'tis sure there is in all habits such a *force*, that they are not to be dispossest, but by a contrary violence; and therefore he that has been under the power of any vicious *custom*, enters at first into a state of *hostility*, has such a tough *opposition*, as rather finds him work than pleasure. Now, if he shall upon this first Essay pronounce, he is like to pass a very *unjust sentence*: Let him fight on a while, till he have got some ground, and then

 though

though the war afforded him little pleasure, the victory will yield him much. Every repeated defeat he gives his adversary, will be a new triumph to him, and what the *Romans* courted as so great a dignity, he may every day enjoy. But then as he advances farther to the compleating of his *victories*, so he does of his *pleasures* too; when his irregular appetites are so subdued, that they rarely make insurrection, this is such a state of *tranquillity* as gives him leisure to discern, and enjoy the delights of Christian Virtue, and will teach him to reproach the highest *Panegyrick* he ever heard of it, as flat and imperfect: So infinitely will he find it exceed the utmost *description*, that he will say with the Queen of *Sheba*, *The one half was not told him*. This is the rich prize which they shall obtain that run the Race, but it is not awarded to the *first step*; and hence it is, so many fail of it, that when they find the uneasiness which attends the breaking off a Custom; this is such a Gyant, a son of *Anak*, as turns them back discourag'd from the *Canaan* they went to view. But alas! this discovers how small a stock of Resolution they carried out with them; for where men set out with heart and appetite, 'tis not such little *difficulties* that will dismay them: If it be but their *sports* they are ingag'd in, it serves to deceive the sense of many uneasinesses, nay, often dangers; he that is but in chase of a silly *Hare* is so keen upon it, that he feels not the weariness of a whole day's motion, and if he meet with a *hedge* in his way, will rather leap, if with hazard, than be diverted from his Game. But 'tis sure in their sins, they suffer far greater hardships without discouragement. The puny *drunkard* is not disheartned by the first *qualm*, but repeats his *excesses*, till he have overcome his *queasiness*. The cast *Litigant* sits not down with one *cross verdict*, but recommences his *suit*, passes it through all Courts, and considers not his own *pains*, so he may either weary, or force the other out of his *right*. The *unclean person* falls not out with his sin, how sadly soever it hath macerated him, but steps out of the *Hot-house* into the *Stews*. And shall men be so indefatigable in their pursuits of *infelicity*, buy one *torment* with another, and drive on the year in a circle of such woful Trafick, and shall *virtue* and *pleasure* be thought not worth the smallest *labour*? Can they keep themselves in a *perpetual contention* with their *ease*, their *reason*, and their *God*; and can they not endure a short *combate* with a sinful *custom*? which, if it have some *uneasiness*, yet 'tis both infinitely short of what they have suffer'd in the contrary compliance, and besides carries its remedy in its hand. For if the difficulty arise only (as doubtless it does) from the confirm'dness of the habit, every act of a resistance, as it weakens the habit, so it abates the difficulty. It is therefore a most unreasonable inference, from the trouble of the first opposition, to conclude the impossibility of the future; for if the first were but troublesome, and not impossible, the second will have yet less of the trouble, and so be yet farther remov'd from impossibility, and the third than the second; and so on till the difficulty vanish and disappear. And if men would but assume such a *moderate courage*, as but to keep the Field, and not to run away upon the first Gun-shot, they would soon find how impotent assailants they had to deal with, who can never subdue any man by strength, who is not first emasculated by his own fears. Let us therefore, to shun the report of so dishonourable a Defeat, awake and rouze our selves, put us in a posture of defence; and *Satan*, who is as cowardly as any thing in the world but we, will, as St. *James* assures us, *flee from us*. Let us upbraid our selves with our unseasonable hardiness and resolution in our impieties, till we have chang'd the Scene, grow impatient of those servile drudgeries, and ambitious of these *honourable adventures*. And to animate us the more, let us fix our eyes upon the glorious prize of the *victory*; and that not only the final and eternal in future Glory, but that intermediate, which offers it self as the earnest of that, the calm and pleasure of a conquering Piety. The *Roman* story tells us, that the *Flavianists* had so possest their minds with the spoils of *Vienna*, that they grew insensible of all dangers in the way to it, and even forc'd their General *Antonio*, to put them upon those hazards, which his wiser conduct would have declin'd. And why should not our more worthy *hopes* excite as great an earnestness? Why should not we have as great an appetite to the pillaging of *Satan's Camp*, plundering that infernal *Magazine* of all its *Engines*, both of *Mine* and *Battery*, its stores of *Arms* and *Ammunition*, leaving him naked and defenceless, unable to make any impression upon us? And this he certainly does, who by a steddy practice of *Virtue*, comes to discern the contemptibleness of those baits, wherewith he allures us. He that seeks only the *Praise of God*, looks upon the *applause of men* as a blast of air, which possibly may demolish and destroy a *glorious building*, but cannot give *foundation*, or *materials* to it; and therefore will not seek for, or solicite its unhappy Courtships. He who desires to be *great* only *in the kingdom of Heaven*, laughs at the *busie aspirings of secular greatness*, and wonders

ders at the force of that enchantment, *which* engages men with so extream toil, to climb a tottering *Pinnacle*, where the standing is uneasie, and the fall deadly. He that covets to be *rich towards God*, and has inur'd his eyes to that *divine splendor*, which results from the *beauty of holiness*, is not dazled with the *glittering shine of Gold*; considers it as a *vein* of the same *earth* he treads on, and despises that absurd partiality whereof the Prophet accuses *Idolaters*, to employ one part to the meanest uses, and fall down to the other. In a word, he that looks on the *eternal things that are not seen*, will through those *opticks* exactly discern the *vanity* and *inconsiderableness* of all that is *visible* and *temporary*; and so will be equally unmoved with the terrors, or allurements of the world, and neither frighted nor flatter'd out of his duty. And he that is thus fortified, discourages and wearies out his tempter, deprives him not only of *Weapons*, but of *Heart* too, and drives even *Satan* himself to desperation; and when the enemy is thus beat out of the field, there remains nothing, but to enjoy the *victory*. When that *reluctance* and *resistance* of the *corrupt appetite* is so weakned and subdued, that a man acts with *freedom*, he acts with *pleasure too*. A *Heart* thus *set at liberty*, alacriously *runs the ways of God's Commandments*: it faring with it as with a *Patient* that is prescrib'd *exercise* for *health*, who at first perhaps find *lassitude* and *trouble* in it, but when the obstructions are remov'd, and nature disburdened of those *noxious humours* that incumbred her, that which was at first his task, becomes his recreation. For we are not to think, that it is any innate harshness in Piety, that renders the first Essays of it unpleasant; that is owing only to the indisposedness of our own Hearts. We are in the Prophet's phrase, *Bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke*; and if we be galled and fretted by it, 'tis because of our impatient strivings, and irregular motions under it; the yoke is really no heavier than it is afterwards, when it is more tamely borne, and yet the ease is very different and unequal. And this teaches us a short way to that felicity we now speak of, to wit, That we compose our selves to such a submiss and malleable temper, that Christ may come only to govern us as sheep, not to be put to tame us as *Tigers*. Let us withdraw all supplies from our *lusts*, and not by any secret reserved affection, give them clancular aids to maintain their *Rebellion*, and then they will not be able long to make any *vigorous opposition*, nor consequently much to disturb the tranquillity of those who have thus resign'd themselves to the government of the *Prince of Peace*: And if this cannot be done in such an instant, but that there will be some previous displicencies, and uneasie strugglings, yet even those like the *Scorpion*, carry antidote against their own *stings*; when 'tis consider'd, that they are but the *pangs* of the *new birth*, they will become very supportable by the expectation of that joy to which they tend. An enslaved people think themselves fairly advanc'd to happiness, if they can get but to make head against their oppressors, though they must expect many sore *conflicts* and sharp *engagements* before they become *Victors*: And certainly 'tis matter of inestimable joy to him, who has been under that sad spiritual slavery, to be set thus upon even terms, with his sword in his hand against those, who once had him in such vassalage, that he durst not lift up a thought against them; but especially when 'tis remembred with what *invincible aids* he is backt, such as will ascertain him of *victory*, if he do not treacherously defeat himself. And surely he must be of a strange *phlegmatick temper*, whom all these considerations will not enliven, convey into him so much spirit as to make an attempt, and engage him to do that upon so pressing, so great a concern, which mere curiosity prompts men daily to in common affairs. And he that is not moulded of this cold and stubborn clay, he that has not lost one of the *elements* of man's composition, and has but a spark of fire in his temper, will surely have some *warmth* towards this so inviting an *experiment*: And when he has once made it, I doubt not it will then joyn with the suffrages, both of Reason and Conscience, in approbation of *Christ's Laws*, and will with *Solomon* pronounce of this spiritual wisdom, *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*, *Prov.* 3. 17.

Contradicted unjustly by the wicked and profane. 30. And now it must be a strange *violence* of impiety that must break this *three-fold cord*, that shall disannul the joynt *sentence* of all that are competent *Judges* in this matter. This is not the strength of *Sampson* that *brake withs and cords*, but of the *Legion that pull'd in pieces Fetters and Chains*; and though too many men make it their *own work*, yet certainly 'tis only the *Devil's interest*: He aspires to the rule and government of us; and to that end nothing can be more contributive, than these prejudices we take up against Christ's conduct. A *Soul* like a *Nation*, can neither bear *two Legislators*, nor be without *one*: and *Satan* having but that single competitor, our quarrelling with Christ's Laws is virtually an embracing of his. When we send *Christ* that rebellious message; *Nolumus hunc regnare*, we say to the other, as the *Trees* to

the

the *bramble*, Judg. 9. 14. *Come thou and reign over us.* And to this defiance of the one, and invitation of his opposite, he very nearly approaches, that thus defames Christ's commands as irrational, or severe. The traducing of a government being, we know, the immediate *Præludium* to the casting it off; *libelling* the forlorn hope, to rebellion. But would God men would soberly weigh whither such a mutinous humour tends; and when our outward *condition* has given us so many pregnant and costly proofs of its ruinous effects, take caution that it make not the like wreck within us: That we do not madly exchange Christ's *gentle service* and *glorious rewards*, for Satan's *cruel bondage*, and crueller *wages*; the *golden chains* of the one, which do more adorn than tie us, for the *iron*, the *adamantine* link of the other, which bind us, till they deliver us over to those *chains* of *darkness*, where our captivity shall be irreversible. If this so reasonable, so necessary a care may be admitted, 'twill certainly confute the profane *sophistry* of our age, silence our impious *cavils*, and instead of providing us of the colour of an austere master to excuse our sloth, will engage us to that diligence that shall supersede the use of such *shifts*; and then we may hope to see *Christianity* have a *resurrection-day* again, assume a body somewhat of solidity and substance, which now wanders about like a *ghost* or *spectre*, a *shade* or vanishing *apparition*, which leaves no footsteps behind it: And to the reunion O let us all emulously contribute, take up every one of us his dry *bones*, and bring them to the *Prophet*, or rather to *Him* who spake by that Prophet, to breath upon them, till at last they be cemented and inspirited in active *duty*, to shew forth the *praises of that God who hath call'd us out of darkness into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. 2. 9.

CHAP. VI.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Partial Obedience.

1. ANother sort of preposterous considerers there are, by whom the *power and force of Christianity* is no less obstructed: And those are they that contrive not how they may most *comply* with *it*, but how they may best bend it to *comport* with *them*; that rebate its edge, or turn it only against such of their corruptions, as they have least kindness for; that weigh the *precepts* with no other design, but that of taking the *lightest*: Those to which their constitutions, or other circumstances carry least repugnance; and come unto the *Gospel*, not as to a *Law*, but to a *market*, cheapen what they best like, and leave the rest for other customers.

Partial Consideration discovered by

2. That thus it is with many, needs no other proof, than the variety visible in the lives of several professors. *One* man behaves himself *modestly*, and tells you his *religion* commands him *humility*; yet at the same time transgresses the as strict precept of justice, and will defraud him he bows to. On the contrary another is *just*, but insolent, and though his sentence do not bend, expects his *clients* should. That man owns the purity of his religion in *visiting the fatherless and widows*, yet disclaims it again, by not *keeping himself unspotted of the world*. This person is abstemious, but uncharitable, will drink no *wine*, but thirsts for *blood*. He prays much, yet curses more; whilst he is meek, but indevout. Now while the rule is one and the same, how should it come, that mens practices should so vary, were it not for the unequal application? Did they take it entire, though there might be difference in the *degrees*, yet sure not in the *kinds* of their virtues; and as men would not differ so from one another, so neither would they from themselves; there would be then no such thing as a *charitable* drunkard, a *devout* oppressor, a *chaste* miser; *monsters* engendred by this unnatural commixture of *light* with *darkness*: But *piety* would be uniform and extensive, and *bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. 10. 5. And till it be thus, *Christianity* can never be thought to have atchiev'd any part of its design, which was not aim'd against any one *single limb*, but against the *whole body* of sin. Alas! 'tis not the lopping off one of the remote *members*, that will render the remaining ones any whit the less vital; the having a *part* less to animate, will rather serve to concenter the spirits, and make them more active in the rest; as we see the *pruning* of trees makes them more *prolifick*. And this effect is very obvious among men: He who has no general dislike to vice, if he repudiate *one*, 'tis commonly that he may cleave closer to *another*; and what he defaulks from some *dry*, *insipid* sin, is but to make up a *Benjamin*'s mess for some other more gustful. If the wanton be

partial and unequal Obedience,

sober,

sober, 'tis odds he thinks *excess* a rival to his *lust*; if the proud man be *liberal*, 'tis because *covetousness* is inglorious: Such unevennesses are caus'd not by an *unkindness* to any sin (unless possibly that aversion which natural constitution raises in some) but by a *partiality* to one or more favourite vices, for whose better accommodation, and securer reign, not only virtue, but other vices also must give place.

which is the summ of many mens Religion,

3. And this 'tis much to be fear'd will, upon a true account, be found to be the summ of many mens *piety*, something they think they must pay to the *importunity* of their religion, which upbraids them so loudly, that they are willing to *stop its mouth*, but yet would do it with as much *frugality*, and good managery as may be, and so consider what 'tis they can best spare; what sin refuse, which brings them in little of satisfaction, and is perhaps in composition with some other more agreeable: and *this* they can be content to devote to the *slaughter*, set it to receive all the *impressions of the sword of the Spirit*, and so use it as a *buckler* to their *darling lusts*, to ward off those blows which must else fall heavy on them; but alas! this is not to *obey*, but to *delude*; to ransom a *greater* sin with a *less*, and to transcribe in this matter the counsel of *Caiaphas*: To *let one die for the people, that the whole nation perish not*; to make one forlorn guilt a patriot to the rest, whilst in the *tempest* which threatened a general *shipwreck*, the *precious wares* are preserv'd, by throwing the *less valuable* over-board.

and renders them secure and negligent in many Duties;

4. And truly that is commonly the event; men are so jolly and triumphant when they have worsted a *trivial inconsiderable sin*, as if they had defeated the *whole army*: This poor despicable *spoil* is set up as their *trophy*, and must, they think, witness for them both to God and man, that they are *good soldiers of Jesus Christ*: They can, like *Saul*, with full confidence meet the *Prophet*, and tell him they have *fulfilled the commandment of the Lord*, 2 Sam. 15. 13. though *Agag* and the best *cattle*, the reigning and fattest *sins* be spar'd. And while they are thus secure, their sins will certainly be so also, have no disturbance or disquiet from them, but lie at ease and rest, feed like *Canibals* upon their own kind, be nourisht by the carcasses of those unlucky vices, on whom the exterminating lot happened to fall; and by that means grow to a prodigious bulk and corpulency. And upon these terms *Satan* himself will allow us to *mortifie some sins*, nay, will himself *cast the first stone at them*; and like a rooking *gamester*, purposely lose these *petty stakes*, that he may afterwards sweep the *board*.

yet well conceited of their Spiritual condition.

5. For if men should give themselves up universally to *all sorts* of ill, if they should set themselves in a total opposition to *all the documents* of their *profession*, he would lose one of his most useful *engines*; there could be no such thing as a false delusive hope, they might possibly by obstinacy *harden*, or by diversion *gag* conscience, but they could not bribe and corrupt it, make it sit down well pleas'd and satisfied with it self. For when the *threats* against disobedience shall occur to the mind of one who has in all instances disobey'd, 'tis impossible he should find any *salve*, any way of evading the thrusts, they make so directly at him: But he who can alledge for himself that he *obeys in some things*, confronts that to all objections, and resolves he is not *in the list* of the *disobedient*: One or two such comfortable instances are as mighty, as God promis'd the *Israelites* should be, *Deut.* 32. 30. *One able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight*. All fears and misgiving thoughts are dissipated and fled before them; and as once the *French King* in his return to the numerous swelling titles of the *Spaniard*, thought the bare repetition of *France*, *France*, *France*, was a full ballance to them all; so when *whole files* of great and scandalous crimes present themselves, *one single virtue* is thought a sufficient counterpoize. He whose conscience upbraids him with all profaneness towards *God*, and insobriety towards *himself*; yet if he can but answer, that he is *just to his neighbour*, he thinks he has *quit scores*, and fears no farther reckonings. He who is immerst in all the *filthiness* both of *flesh* and *spirit*, has abandon'd his mind to *pride* and *envy*, his body to *lust* and *intemperance*; and so sacrificed both those to *Devils*: Yet if he cast but *some grains* of his estate upon the altar; devote any *small part* of that to God, for the use of *piety* or *charity*; he concludes that *incense* will send up a cloud thick enough to obscure the other from the *eyes* of divine justice, and yield so sweet a savour, as will perfume him in spight of all that noisomness: So extending old *Tobit*'s words beyond his meaning, that *alms, though alone, delivereth from death, and cleanseth from all sin*. He who is deep in *sacrilege* and *rebellion*, that can daringly swallow repeated deliberate *perjuries*; yet if he can get but the demure tenderness, to *fear a sudden oath*, he is *Chymist* enough to extract a *confidence* out of that *fear*, and presumes that *formal* civility to God's name shall expiate all the *real* violations and contempts of him. And while men make such use of their *partial piece-meal* obedience, it can never be the *Devil*'s *interest* to disturb them *in* it, to awake them out of their pleasant dream, or to exact *of* them to deposite

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those poor insignificant *remains* of their Christianity, which serve only to make them more *supine*, not more *safe*.

6. Nay, indeed his affairs are so stated, that to some he can and does, and without danger, allow a yet far *greater indulgence*; he can permit them to bid much fairer than this for heaven, and yet knows the purchase is far from being made; he can see them cashier not some one *single sin*, but *whole troops* together, and yet not fear the sinking of his cause: He can trust them so far, that as the *young man* in the Gospel, they may be pronounc'd, *Not far from the kingdom of God*; yet as long as there is but *one* unmortified lust, that can send them away *sad from Christ*, his tenure is firm enough. *Herod may hear John Baptist gladly*, nay, do many things upon it, yet let him but keep *Herodias*, and she will soon be able to secure both *her self* and *Satan* against the danger of that competition. This is indeed his main advantage, that he can hold fast by the *smallest thread*; and whereas to our bliss a conspiration and union of all virtues is required, our *ruin* can spring from any *one* solitary crime; *many rounds* make that ladder wherewith we must scale *heaven*: Whereas *one step* serves to precipitate us into the *abysse*; so sadly verifying the poetical axiom, *Facilis descensus Averni*. In summ, while there is but any *one single sin* indulg'd to, that is the *Devil's tedder*; and though it should be imagin'd so loose, as to give men scope to range over *all other sorts* of virtues, to taste the sweet, and feed liberally on them; yet still the *beast* is in the power of him who has fixt the line, not only to be finally led away to *slaughter*, but also to have the *length shortned*, and be either put out of the *reach*, or quite removed from the *view* of those *pleasant pastures*.

The Devil's policy is to ensnare a soul by a single lust,

7. For though the security rais'd by such an ununiform piety, is in many so exactly apportion'd to *Satan's interest*, that he has no cause to wish the change of his tenure; yet where the circumstances are such, as will make it useful, he can easily twist his *thread* into a *cable*. When he thinks one *monarch* lust too mild a regimen, he can set up an *Athenian* tyranny, or which is yet worse, let in the whole *populacy* of sin upon the soul, which like the *Egyptian locusts*, shall over-run and devour it, *not leave any green thing on the ground*; and that this is in his power we have too much reason to conclude. He is, we know, a cunning *sophister*, and if he has abus'd us so far as to impose *one* sin upon us, he may thence very regularly deduce *many more*; as *one* false premise admitted, may be improved into *thousands* of false conclusions. Indeed supposing a man resolute to adhere to one sin, he may with very good *Logick* persuade him to multitudes of others. There are but two *objections* usually made to any temptation; either the *offence*, or the *danger*; and these are usually objectable to one sin, as well as to another. So that this *dilemma* readily offers it self: Either it is reasonable to buy a *pleasure* at that price, or it is not: If it be, then contrive that the *crime* be pleasant, and that brings its *dispensation* with it: If it be not, then why dost thou live in this one sin in despite of both guilt and punishment? The *latter* part of the *dilemma* 'tis no part of Satan's business to press, but the *former* he has too much advantage of pursuing successfully; if he can but dress up a temptation to look invitingly, the business is done. So ridiculous a thing is an uneven *piety*, that it even laughs it self out of countenance, and wants only temptation to become *uniform vice*. How absurdly looks it, to see a man run away with *Joseph* from the embraces of his *mistress*, and yet with full as great a speed accompany *Gehazi* in the pursuit of a *bribe*? and how obvious is it to conclude that the former assault was improsperous, only because not manag'd with the *right weapon*; that he might have been *hir'd*, that would not be *wooed*? What a *mockery* is it for a man to be *zealous for God*, and *rebellious against his king*? As in the reverse, for a man to be *true to his king*, and a *rebel to his God*? And who can but think, that had either of the averted *crimes* been cookt to their *palates*, they might have chang'd *messes*? Indeed 'tis not imaginable by what rules of discourse he that embraces *one sin*, should reject *another*: If it be done only upon *fancy* and *humour*, as the *repulst vice* will have reason to complain of great *partiality*, when as bad as it self is receiv'd and cherish'd; so it points out a way to attack him more prosperously. Let it shape it self to the fancy; and sure *Satan*, who can *transform himself to an angel of light*, can soon work that easie *change*. Let the *younger* brother get on the clothes of the favourite *Esau*, transform it self into the shape and interest of the darling sin, and it need not doubt of a free admission. But all this while to pretend *conscience* for such an *abstinence*, is of all other pleas the most absurd; for why should he scruple at one, that abandons himself to another? as St. *James* argues concerning the *guilt*, so may we for the *act* of sin: He that said, *Do not commit adultery*, said also, *Do not kill*; and 'tis abusive mockery, the soldiers *Ave rex*, to bow to his *authority* in the *one*, and resist it in the *other*. Thus unhappy is the case of him who entertains one

whereby he is easily tempted to more and greater sins;

sin,

sin, his enclosure is broken down, and he's a Common for all: He is left destitute of a reply to any temptation, and like a *bashful* person, will be in danger of *yielding*, because he is asham'd to *deny*: And this I doubt not, many have found experimentally true; some sins have been committed, not so much upon the force of inclination, as to be consentaneous to themselves, to silence the upbraidings of their understandings for acting so unevenly, it being impossible to give a reasonable account, why *this*, and not *that*, or *that*; for when by *one bold wilful sin* a man is enter'd into a *state of hostility* with God, 'tis not a *tenderness in all others* will make up the *breach*: And then they think the rule of known enemies takes place, where all civilities are disclaim'd, and the quarrel manag'd to the most advantage. The resolv'd *adulterer* could perhaps without much difficulty be just; but when he considers that that one *Helena* of his will certainly make a war, he thinks 'tis an impertinent *niceness* to lose a good prize, or dismiss his *covetousness*, while he resolves to retain his *lust*. The incorrigible *drunkard* could perchance easily enough be *chaste*, but when he remembers that *drunkenness excludes him from the kingdom of heaven*; having made that sale of his eternal inheritance, he thinks 'tis but good husbandry to get as much as he can for it: So *treacherous a guest* is any *one sin* admitted, and lodg'd in the heart, it despoils it of all its armour of defence, leaves it nothing wherewith to guard it self against any assailant; and be it *never so small* a one, 'tis like those *little thieves*, which being put in at the window, set the doors open to all the rest.

except such as his natural complexion is averse to,

8. But perhaps this *danger* may be thought in some degree warded by the *natural temper* and constitution of men, which necessarily renders them unapt to *contradictory vices*, and so will secure them at least from so many as are disagreeable to their temper: But if this should be granted, yet it confessedly leaves them open to all others, and that were certainly bad enough: He that is as *wicked*, as his *complexion* cannot only encline, but permit him to be, will not want much of the utmost number of sins: But whatever we can suppose that to strike off from the tale, yet in the second place, 'tis very much to be fear'd, that will defaulk nothing of the weight; he that sins to the height of his *appetite*, perhaps *power*, shall he be ever the more *innocent*, because there were some *nauseated sins*, which he had not self-denial enough to commit? God absolves us in proportion to the *rectitude* of our wills, not the *niceness* of our complexions: He that wills to pursue whatever he can find *gustful*, how impious soever; shall it be *virtue* in him that some sins are *unsavoury*, and disagreeing to his *palate*? If it should, there may so many extrinsick things be by analogy brought in, either to swell, or abate the accounts of our sins, that we shall be much to seek in the estimate of it.

which the habit of other sins will in time conquer and overcome.

9. But in the third place, even these very aversions are no infallible preservative; for if they happen to be more moderate and remiss, than the love of some other sin; that *predominant inclination* will subdue those *dislikes*, whenever its *interest* is to be serv'd by those otherwise not *gustful commissions*. There is nothing more ordinary, than to see one appetite pursued to the violation of another. A man perhaps hates *drunkenness*, not only as a *bestial*, but *uneasie vice*; yet if his *love* to gain exceed his *dislike* to that, when that is requisite to make up the price of a *good bargain*, that *aversion* must stoop, and give way. A man despises *swearing*, as an *insipid*, *impertinent sin*; yet if he set any great value upon *being in the mode*, and complying with the *gentile dialect*, that will soon debase him to what he so much contemn'd: And truly there is scarce any other account to be given of that great and foolish sin. But in no other instance is this so notoriously visible, as in that of *duelling*. I need not single out any one man's particular *inclination*; the nature of mankind doth certainly avert both killing, and being kill'd: Yet when that *Phantasm*, that *Chimæra*, honour, has once possest the mind, no reluctance of humanity is able to make head against it; but it commands as uncontroul'dly, as the *Centurion* in the Gospel *says to this man*, *Go, and he goes*, *to another*, *Come, and he cometh*: Nay, as tyrannically as the great *Cham* of *Tartary*, who as an essay of his sovereignty, *commands whole troops to ride down precipices*; nay, these aversions are not only thus violently subdued by some foreign *lust*, but are many times destroy'd, even by *force* of that very *vicious principle* which gave them *birth*; for we mistake if we think they are always virtuous, or so much as innocently founded. Vice is often at civil wars with it self, and the vehement *inclination* to one, ingenders a *displicency* to another; but yet such a *riddle* is this *mystery of iniquity*, that upon the very same *basis* is built both the *abhorrence*, and *commission* of the same sin. For *example*, a proud man as much hates to *fawn* and *flatter others*, as he loves to be flatter'd himself; yet let his *pride* but once work the other way, and set him upon an *ambitious project*, then all the mean condescentions imaginable are with ease

6 digested,

digested, he can crouch and prostrate, and as the *Psalmist* speaks, *fall down and humble himself*, that by that descent he may rebound to the height he aims at; but still pride is the common cause of these so distant effects. In like manner the riotous Prodigal detests *covetousness*, looks upon it as so sordid and base, that he brands even *prudent frugality*, as approaching too near it; yet let him but once find the *springs* to grow dry, which should feed his *luxury*, when he feels his Riot begins to exhaust, and prey upon it self, then even that *despised Covetousness* shall be call'd in to its aid, to dig *metal* for the Furnace to melt, and so by a strange *Antiperistasis*, *prodigality* shall beget *rapin*. Thus unhappily *prolifick* is every sin, that it carries in its bowels the *seed* and *principle*, even of those that seem the most *Heterogeneous*; and then how shall a man that has admitted but any one such teeming lust, be secur'd that it shall not thus propagate, till his *Soul* become a mere *desert*, fill'd with all sorts of *wild* and *noxious creatures*.

except restrain'd by the grace of God, which such men have no reason to expect.

10. There is but *one hope* imaginable to interpose, and that is, that *God's grace* shall prevent this exorbitant *growth of impiety* in him, and I acknowledge that is sufficient to do it, where it may have its kindly *operation*; but where it has so, it will uniformly suppress all sin, and therefore where *any one* continues in force and vigour, 'tis manifest, that *operation* of Grace is obstructed, and such a man I should desire soberly to consider what assurance he has, that he who has so evacuated God's Grace in one instance, shall not do so in another? If *in spight* of that Grace he can be lustful, why shall he not be as able to resist it *in favour* of Drunkenness, Sacrilege, Rebellion, or any other crime to which he shall at any time have appetite? Can he imagine that God sends forth an irresistible strength against some sins, whilst in others he permits men a power of repelling his *Grace*? That were to transcribe the *Syrians* absurd fansie, that he is *a God of the hills, and not of the valleys*: No certainly, he who has his own unhappy experience, to attest the possibility of frustrating the Divine succours in one particular, has too sure grounds to infer the like in others. Nay, alas! it does not only infer it by way of *argument* and *deduction*, but it is very apt to produce it by way of *cause* and *efficiency*: We gain a readiness to any thing by custom and assuefaction, and he, who has habitually oppos'd *Grace* in the defence of a *Lust*, has deliver'd himself from that modesty, which makes the first defiance uneasie, and so runs on with ease and boldness to future resistance. It fares with men in this violation of *God's Grace*, as it does in that of his *Patrimony*, the first Sacrilege is lookt on with some horror, and men are fain to devise *arguments* and colours, to delude their reluctating *Consciences*; but when they have once made the breach, their scrupulosity soon retires; one draught of that *impious gain* has such a *stupefying effect*, that they can without check swallow on, till the sin flame so fiercely, that nothing but mere want of matter can extinguish it. But admit it were possible for a man to be secur'd of his own compliance, with some part of restraining Grace, whilst he impugns it in others, yet who shall ascertain him of that Grace? It being God's, implies 'tis not in our power, he may surely do what he will with his own, and though his *promise* has made a sure *entail* of it to all those, who *humbly seek* and *diligently use* it; yet it no where engages that it shall be the *portion* of any other, much less that it shall importunately and endlesly renew its assaults on those who have often repulst and put it to flight: In that case *God's resolution* concerning the *old world* becomes applicable, *My spirit shall not always strive with man*; and *Christ* who forbids us to *cast our pearls before Swine*, will certainly never prostitute what is infinitely more precious, his *Grace*, to those who have so long trampled it under their feet; and so those must be concluded to have done, who have persevered in any one sin, for Grace is uniformly opposite to all, and therefore the cleaving to any is defiance and affront to it. But we need not the help of inferences and deduction, the threats of God are express in this matter: The *Talent* is decreed to be taken from the *unprofitable servant*, who has not employed it to the proper use, and such infallibly is *every man*, who has not actuated the *Grace* given him to the subduing of every *reigning sin*; and the *reprobate mind* mention'd in Scripture, as the most dismal of all Plagues, the νᾶς ἀδόκιμ☉· which yields not to the melting and the purging force of fire, and therefore does consign to that of Hell, is founded upon the voluntary rejection of God in particular instances, *Rom.* 1. How then can he, that in any one single thing so rejects him, assure himself that shall not be the event of it? that he who would not have Christ rule entirely in his *heart*, shall at once be put out of his *government* and *protection*? have all those spiritual aids withdrawn, which should either assist him to *good*, or fortifie him against *ill*; and like an out-law'd person, be expos'd to the outrage of all that will assault him?

The Devil is content we should be partially good.

11. And now would God this might be sadly pondered, that men would not be their own *Sirens*, and entertain themselves with those deceitful *melodies*, which will end

end in *howlings and gnashings of teeth*; that they would not think their having some few Virtues, and but some few Vices, will serve to satisfie the design, or procure them the rewards of their Christianity: For if they should continue in this posture, and not be tempted to grow worse, they may certainly conclude, 'tis because Satan finds they need not. And can they be *proud* of that Virtue, which the Devil himself will allow them? and think themselves *good* enough, when they are as bad as he wishes them? But even in this, they have no other tenure than his Will. When he pleases for his interest, or even for his divertisement and recreation, he may hurry them to all that is most enormous; convert their *Hypocrisie* to *Profaneness*, their *partial* Piety to *universal* Ungodliness; they have nothing to interpose in their own defence, not so much as a reasonable argument to oppose to him; they have made a voluntary sale of themselves for one or more beloved sin, and now as his *vassals*, he may impose on them what others he pleases; and by their doting affection to their *Rachel*, take advantage also to obtrude the despis'd *Leah* upon them. And how wretched, how deplorable is this state? What a *Piety* is this that we must owe to the *Devil*, while we can be no better than he will let us?

So he can but ensnare us by any one Lust.

12. Yet this is without *Hyperbole* the condition of every man that is not sincerely, uniformly Christian; every indulg'd sin gives *Satan* livery and seisin of his heart, and a power to dispose of it as he pleases. I know men are apt to flatter themselves with other hopes, and think that those obediences they pay to God, shall like a pre-ingagement disannul all after-contracts made by guilt, and put them into the possession of him, who is able to *bind* that *strong man*. But God will not be accessary to such a fraud, even towards the Devil; while they keep the price, enjoy that pleasure, or profit wherewith he bought them, God will never interpose to defeat him of his purchase.

God will not share our obedience with the Devil.

13. And as God will not thus forcibly wrest them out of his hands, much less will he descend to a capitulation and composition with him. *God is a jealous God*, and what *jealous husband* did ever by compact divide his right with the *Adulterer*? Where he finds a persevering disloyalty, he gives a bill of divorce and disclaims his relation. Yet so besotted are men, as to hope God will ratifie that alienation they have made of one part of their heart, and contentedly enjoy the rest; and as competitors use sometimes to do, share with his Rival. But alas! that immortal quarrel will not be thus taken up, the difference between these irreconcileable *Antagonists* will not be so compromised. God disdains such a treaty, nor will ever come so much as to an interview with his enemy, within the lists and recesses of one heart. And while men labour such an accord, they are but combining with *Satan* against *God* and their own *Souls*: He knows well, that while he holds any part, God will have none, and so the whole falls to him, and then he may very safely be modest, and demand but moderately, and by that seeming deference and yielding, gain more than by all his most eager contendings. I suppose every man will disown the having this ridiculous design of compounding the strife between *Heaven* and *Hell*, but certainly it is the natural interpretation of such partial obediences; when two *Litigants* contend for something, which I have in my keeping, if I divide it between them, is it not obvious to conclude, I desire to compose the dispute and satisfie both parties; and is not this the very case here? 'Tis true indeed, it carries a very absurd sound, but then how more absurd is it for men to act at such a rate, that when 'tis represented to them in the truest colours, themselves are ashamed to own what they have done? And this calls loudly upon them, to put themselves out of the lash of their own discipline; to recover such an innocence, that they may not be forc'd with *David* to sentence themselves, when that their crimes appear in the light disguise of a *Parable*.

He must renounce all sin, to avoid the Devil's snares;

14. And this indeed is the only proper use of all these considerations, the danger and folly are as *unuseful* as *unpleasant* speculations, unless it be in order to the reforming that wherein both are founded. Let them consider themselves, as engaged in those wild projects, which even themselves look on with scorn; as ensnar'd in that unhappy contract, which has rendred them part of the *Devil's* possession, and contrive how they may obliterate that reproach, and disintangle their mortgag'd Souls.

15. And for this there is but one way imaginable, and that is by quitting their hands of that which they took, as the valuable consideration in that mad bargain; restoring *Satan's* coyn to him, not only *principal*, but *use* also; casting away the main sin and all the little appendages, which like off-sets have shot out from that root; retaining nothing that has his mark and impress upon it, that so he may not pretend to any thing of theirs by right of barter or exchange. This, and this only is the way to disseise him of his estate, to cancel those fatal Indentures which bound them to him; and till this be done,

as long as they keep any part of his *wages of Iniquity*, his title remains in full force, they are still his *servants*, his *vassals*.

otherwise no benefit by Christ's Redemption.

16. Even the *redemption of Christ* has no efficacy towards the enfranchising of such, for though it proclaim an universal *Jubilee*, yet it forces liberty upon none; he that will nail his ear to the door-post, and defie a manumission, may continue his slavish life still, and indeed though Christ's death was design'd to rescue us from the power of Satan, yet the first Essay of that rescue was to redeem us from our vain conversation: And where that is not done, which is so essentially fundamental to all the rest, 'tis not possible any other part of that Redemption should be atchiev'd, unless we will confound that order of *Nature* as well as *Grace*, and make the *consequent* precede the *antecedent*.

The great danger of obstinate persisting in any one sin;

17. Let no man therefore upon any vain hopes delay the one only expedient to his security, but pay back the *earnest peny* he has received from *Satan*, fling away his *sin*, how pleasant, or profitable soever, with the greatest abhorrence, as knowing 'tis the *price of blood*, and that not only his *Saviour*'s, but his *own* too; and this immediately, lest the forfeiture be irreversible. We know the danger of lapsing time in case of mortgage, but here our danger is greater, because the time is so uncertain; for though God had nothing else to do in the whole transaction ('twas wholly our own work) yet 'tis he that assigns the time of forfeiture: He alone knows how far we may go in sin, before we pass the possibility of a retreat; how long he will be provok'd, before he suffer his whole displeasure to arise; and how many repellings of his Grace, and quenchings of his Spirit they are, to which his desertions are apportion'd. *Pharaoh*'s heart was hardned by God after the *eighth Resistance*, and we have no security but ours may be *sooner*, yet if that should be taken as the standing measure, how dreadful an abode would it make to many of us? Who is there that has espoused any one *beloved sin*, that has not much oftner repeated the *acts* of it, every one of which is a resistance and contumacy against God? Who is there that has not done it against so many express warnings and loud calls of God in his own *Conscience*? Which renders it yet a fuller *parallel*, and 'tis to be fear'd, too many agree with it even in the last and highest circumstance, that of the *Plagues* too, by an obstinate persisting after so many *Judgments* sent to mollifie and reclaim them; and then where the *premisses* are the same, 'tis too likely the *conclusion* may be so also.

the guilt whereof is greater in Christians, than Heathens,

18. I shall not wish any person so strictly to apply this case, as to conclude, that he is already in this state, but I could wish all men would apply it so far, as to infer how *possible*, nay how *probable* it is, that the very next resistance shall put them in it. 'Tis not *Pharaoh*'s being a *Heathen*, and they *Christians*, that will give them any security; it being no part of the Gospel Covenant, that men shall be ever the longer allowed to trample upon Grace. All the difference it makes is rather on the other side; the contempts are enhans'd to a higher guilt, and consequently, the fewer acts may now serve to fill up the measure. And if their experience testifie to them, that in their particular God has us'd a greater long-suffering, than he has given any grounds to expect; if the guilt of their Consciences testifie that they have committed many more acts, and yet some remaining tendernesses and regrets witness also, that they are not yet given up to an utter hardness and obduration, O let them not presume themselves safe, because they are not utterly desperate; but lay their hearts open to be stampt and imprest by grace, before they grow utterly inflexible; timely consider what is the design of this *longanimity*, and without any more struglings and resistance suffer it to attain its aim, and *lead them to repentance*.

and disposeth to utter hardness and impenitency.

19. For though their Souls be not yet wholly petrefied, yet how know they in what an instant that unhappy *Metamorphosis* may be wrought? or if it should not be so sudden, yet 'tis certain every act of sin makes gradual approaches towards it: So that if God should not inflict it by way of *punishment*, yet the mere force of habit would produce it by way of *natural efficacy*. And to be convinc'd of this, I should require no more, but that men would reflect, and see what effects it has already wrought, how far it has advanc'd towards that fatal point. Let them send their thoughts back through every stage and period of their sin, and observe whether as that has grown, so their tenderness and reluctance of conscience has not abated and decreas'd: Let them but recollect what regrets and disquiets they had, when they ventur'd upon the first unlawful commission, and compare it with their present, and I doubt not they will discern a great inequality; they will find that every act of sin hath allayed somewhat of the sharpness of those pangs, and proportionably to the frequency of the repetition they approach toward insensible: And then let him whose older habit has multiplied those *acts*, sadly consider how few *steps* he has to the end of his unhappy journey, though no extrinsick

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concurrent should hasten his pace. But when God's desertion shall, as for ought he knows it may the next minute, supervene; that as a full and violent *wind* drives him in an instant, not to the *harbour*, but on the *rock*, where he will be irrecoverably split.

The wilfulness of any sin is the highest aggravation thereof.

20. Nor let any man fortifie himself against these terrors, by hoping that his own *single*, perhaps small sin, shall not have this destructive force; for if it be *wilful*, it carries in it that which is properly the *malignity* of all sin, to wit, a resistance and opposition against God; and this is so *mortal* a venom, that the least dose of it is *deadly*, as a man may as certainly be poison'd by a *dram* of *Arsenick*, as with the *largest draught*.

The smallest sin not to be allow'd in.

21. The more natural inference lies the other way, if it be but a single or petty sin, 'tis so much the easier to part with; he that is bound with a *strong cable*, or with a multitude of lesser cords, may pretend some *necessity* of his captivity, from the strength of his bonds; but he that is tied with *one slender string*, such as one resolute struggle would be sure to break, he is *prisoner* only to his own *sloth* or humour, and who will pity his *thraldom*, where 'tis so apparently his *choice?* Do not therefore say, My sin is inconsiderable, and therefore I need not *relinquish* it; but, My sin is inconsiderable, therefore I need not *keep* it. So slight a pleasure I may part with, and find no miss: This pedling profit I may resign, and 'twill be no breach in my estate. And if *Christ* require a renunciation of *those sins*, which are as the *hand* and *eye*, shall I scruple to deposite *those*, which are but as the *hair* or *nails?*

The lesser the sin, the greater the guilt in not parting with it.

22. Nay, he may yet argue higher, and from the smalness of the sin deduce the enhansement of the guilt: Great acquisitions carry some temptation in their face, but despicable prizes do rather avert, than tempt. 'Twas the sign of a *common harlot* to be *hired with a kid*, Gen. 38. and sure he must be of a strange prostitute soul, that can adulterate for such low trivial wages. To dishonour God, though the *whole world* were to be acquir'd by it, were *great impiety*; but to do it for *handfuls of barley*, and *pieces of bread*, Ezek. 13. 19. himself brands as a yet higher pitch. And sure it argues a very light esteem of God, when one poor contemptible lust shall be able to over-poize him in our hearts.

Folly to endanger our Souls for a single Lust;

23. Nor is the *folly* less than the *profaneness*, when there is but one *Jonah* to be cast over-board, 'tis the greater madness to hazard a *wreck*; and let such a man pretend what he pleases in extenuation of his sin, make that appear never so minute and despicable, yet 'tis apparent all the love which other men scatter and distribute upon several, he has united and concentred in this one lust. The most *doting* affection, when it is summed up, can amount to no more than *this*, that it makes a man expose himself to the greatest *pain*, the greatest *loss* for the thing beloved. And this is most visible here, *Hell* is as certainly acquir'd, and *Heaven* as certainly forfeited by *one* sin, as *many*; and then though there may be odds in other respects, yet what is there in this, between this more *modest*, and the most *licentious* sinner, but that the *former* puts the same value upon one, that the *other* does upon many sins, and sells his soul so much the cheaper?

the pleasure and profit whereof is but small.

24. And now would God such men would review their *bargain*, soberly consider what there is in this *idoliz'd sin* of theirs, which should exact such *costly sacrifices*. Let him whose long intimacy and experience has given him access to its most secret recesses, that has rifled its bowels, and knows the utmost whether of pleasure or profit that lies there conceal'd: Let him, I say, that is thus qualified for it, make an exact inventory of its wealth, and then let him compare it with what he is to pay for it; weigh its flat and *momentary pleasures*, with those most transcending, and *perpetual joys* which are *at God's right hand*; its base and perishing commodities, with those unfailing treasures in Heaven; and then judge of his purchase in respect of that part of his price. And if that be not convincement enough, let him weigh the other also; those sad *pains* which are too *intolerable* to be suffer'd, and yet so *eternal*, that they can never cease to be suffer'd; and think whether that be not too dear a rate for that pleasure, whose gust is so little, and whose duration is less: Or what *profit* he will have in the revenue of his sin, that *gold* and *silver* which will finally *eat his flesh as it were fire*, Jam. 5. 3. and prove the unhappy *fuel of his flames*.

All sin and vice to be entirely renounc'd.

25. From all these *premisses* certainly Reason and Religion do equally infer the same *conclusion*, to wit, that men should not tolerate themselves one minute in any known sin, of how small a size soever it be; nor so impertinently betray their souls to ruin, for that which they call light and trivial; and is so indeed in respect of the *acquist*, but overwhelmingly ponderous in regard of the *effects* and pernicious consequence. And O that mens practices might evince them to have made this just deduction, that those who have in many things preserv'd an *innocence*, would not be so ill husbands as

to forfeit all the *advantage* of that care, for want of extending it a little farther, not suffer the whiter parts of their soul to be discolour'd or tincted by the reflection of one crimson sin; but rather let their tears wash that into a whiteness, that they may be uniform and of a piece. For though *Jacob* clad his darling *Joseph* in a party-colour'd garment; yet God owns none either for favourite *son*, or so much as *servant*, that he finds so arrayed. The *followers of the Lamb* are all clad in *white*, and in that attire we must be sure to put our selves, if we mean to go in with him to the *marriage*. And since the Gospel is the invitation to that feast, let none imagine he has complied with it, till he have thus fitted himself: Till then he affronts and *baffles* his Christianity, sends it away empty without its errand; nay, which is worse, *prostitutes* and profanes it, makes it serve only for a *gourd*, that he may sit under the shadow of it, and commit his sins the more undisturbed; but let him remember that he is all this while breeding that *worm*, which will smite this *gourd*, and leave him unshelter'd to that scorching *wrath* of God, which will make the improvement of *Jonah*'s passionate wish, that God would take away his life, his most rational desire; render not death only, but annihilation also as *eligible*, as it will be *impossible*.

CHAP. VII.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Mistakes concerning Repentance.

Great Mistakes about Repentance.

1. ANOTHER dangerous underminer of Christian Practice, is the many affected mistakes in the business of *Repentance*. Men look upon that as the grand *Recipe* of the Gospel, and infallible *Catholicon* against all their spiritual *maladies*; and so far they judge right, for so indeed it is. But when they proceed to compound this sovereign *medicine* for their own use, they do it most deceitfully; leave out the principal and most operative *ingredients*: And by being such ill *apothecaries*, defame the Gospel as the *dispensatory*, and *Christ* as the *Physician*, and likewise ruin themselves as the *patients*. But of those who make this imperfect and defective *composition*, all do it not alike; some leave out one part, some another, and some so many, that they retain nothing of its substance and reality: Eat out all the *heart* and virtue of it, and leave only an empty *shell*, the gilding, as it were, of the *pill*, the form and mere outside of *Repentance*.

Some place Repentance only in outward gestures and appearances;

2. In this latter rank I place those who suffer *Repentance* to pass no farther than their frontiers, and out-works, assign it its quarters in the *superficies* of the man, the *face*, or *tongue*, or *gesture*; but if it attempt to penetrate any deeper, if it send but one serious thought to alarm the heart, then like the *Edomites* against *Israel*, Numb. 20. all the forces are mustered to impede its passage; such formal penitents as these all ages have produc'd. Christ tells us of those who *disfigur'd their faces*, Matth. 6. 16. put on, as it were, a vizard only to act this part: And *Isaiah* 58. 5. long before describes them, by the *bowing down the head like a bul-rush*, and certainly the race of them is not worn out in our days; a demure, or rather a lugubrious *look*, a sad or whining *tone*, makes up, 'tis to be fear'd, the *summ* of many mens humiliations. Nay, as the world has of late gone, that alone were but a modest pretence: Such theatrical *forms* stickle hard for the *prize*, not of that one part, but of all religion: A *distorted countenance* is made the mark of an *upright heart*, and none is thought to speak the language of *Canaan*, that dresses it not in an uncouth sound: And then what wonder is it, that they are impatient others should *worship God*, as *David* invites, *in the beauty*, while themselves choose to do it, in the deformity *of holiness*.

others in a bare acknowledgment and confession of sin.

3. But others make somewhat a fairer advance towards *repentance*, by taking in some of those things which are indeed its *necessary concomitants*; of this kind is in the first place *confession of sin*; and this after some sort is stuck at by few; no man who hath not herded himself with the worst sort of *fanaticks*, imagines himself sinless, or pretends to be thought so by others, but will very readily acknowledge to all the world that he is a *sinner*: And as to *men*, so especially, and more solemnly to *God*. Every man that but offers at praying at all, thinks Confession a necessary branch of his devotion: All publick *forms* have ever carried that in the *front*, as supposing it the most principal, universal, and daily requisite to the lapsing state of human corruption: And perhaps 'tis the general innate persuasion of this, that hath secured that part of

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our *Liturgy*, from those impertinent cavils, which have particularly aim'd at most other members of it. And I suppose this is as frequent in the *closet*, as in the *Church*: The only fear is, that there it is as loose and general too; that those private and particular guilts, which are neither fit nor possible to be distinctly inserted in *publick*, do many times lose their place even in *private* Confessions also. The shortness and the ease of general forms, being very likely to recommend them to those, whose numerous sins threaten too great a length, and whose confus'd snarl'd consciences render it difficult thus to pull out thread by thread: But where *sins* are thus moulded up in a *lump*, they will, like great *masses of pills* or confections keep the more undecay'd, retain more of their *strength* and *vigour*. So that *such* Confessions are very indulgent to *Satan's interest*, who fears not the impressions that can be made upon him, while his *body* remains entire: The great execution then beginning, when 'tis broken and scatter'd, and each sin is singled out for a particular pursuit: And where that is not attempted, the war can never be successful, nor thought in earnest.

Confession of sin without forsaking it, is unacceptable to God.

4. But suppose this be done, and by exact enumeration each sin is parted from its fellows, as when a *conqueror* pursues the *flying troops* of routed enemies: Yet if this be all, if *quarter* be allowed, and any mercy given, no *real prize* is gain'd by this atchievement. He who recounts his sins with milder purpose towards them, than utter excision, he makes no approach towards the essential part of repentance. He may bring out large *catalogues* of his sins, and call them *Confessions*; but he may better express his own sense, if he term them rather *inventories* of his goods, for such 'tis apparent he reckons them, whilst he resolves to keep them. Indeed there is not a more absurd piece of *pageantry*, than these *formal* Confessions, and such as shews how little *God* is considered in his great attribute, *the Searcher of hearts*. 'Tis certain no man would hope to atone an offended superior, by a submiss acknowledgment of his fault, did he know that his purpose of reiterating it were discern'd: And what a tacit *blasphemy* is it then, to treat *God* at such a rate, as presumes him as *deceivable* as a poor *mortal*? and sure this were a strange ingredient in *repentance*. We look on it as a high pitch of impiety, boasting to avow our sins; and it deserves to be consider'd, whether this kind of confessing them have not some affinity with it. Should I tell a man, I have injur'd and provok'd you thus and thus, and so I resolve to do again at the next opportunity: I refer it to common construction, whether this were not to *justifie*, not retract the unkindness. Now what I suppose thus said to man, is in the secret purpose of our heart no less articulately spoken to God, who needs not our words to discern our meaning. Therefore whoever intends to *repeat* his sins, nay, does not seriously intend to *forsake* them, doth in truth maintain and defend his vicious practice, how loudly soever his tongue accuses it. And such *clamors* are but like the feign'd quarrels of combin'd *cheats*, in order to delude some third person. But alas! the scene is here unluckily laid, for God will not be mock'd, nor will the *mercy* promis'd to him that confesseth and *forsaketh*, ever reach him that confesseth and *retaineth*. Confession is no farther acceptable, than as it either flows from, or tends to beget an abhorrence of sin, and abstracted from those qualifications, it becomes loathsom and distastful to God. Alas! can we think our *historical* vein so pleasant, that he shall be delighted with the *narrative* of those crimes, whose perpetration he detested? Can it be *incense* in his nostrils, to have our *dunghils* display'd? or can his pure eyes be gratified with such polluted prospects? True indeed, he gladly descends to all this as a *Physician*; nauseates not our *foulest ulcers*, when we bring them for *cure*: But when like *beggars* we make them openly our form of address, and dread nothing more than their *healing*; certainly their view will only excite his *indignation*, not his pity. And this, 'tis to be fear'd, abodes sadly to many of us; 'tis our vulgar objection to the *Romanists*, that they make their confessions contributive rather to their *confidence*, than to their *reformation*: What their share is in that guilt, I shall not here examine, but I may too truly pronounce, they have not enclos'd it; that black circle of Sin and *confess*, Confess and *sin*, encompasses as well *Protestants* as *Papists*; if possibly not quite so many, the cause 'tis doubtful is (what we need not boast) not that more of us confess *aright*, but that fewer confess *at all*. But of those that do, if we may but cross examine, and interrogate their *actions* against their *words*, these will soon confess (and that not *auricularly*, but in a loud and audible voice) the *invalidity* of their solemnest confessions. When we see a man that *yesterday* kept a humiliation, *to day* trampling on the necks, invading the possessions of his brethren, we need no other proof how vainly and unprofitably, if not how hypocritically and provokingly he confessed his pride, or covetousness: And the like we may infer, when we see any man persevere in any gross wilful sin. And of such, God knows, there are such multitudes, as will give us instances

 more

more than enough, how wide a difference there is between a *mere confitent*, and a *true penitent*.

5. But in the next place, a *passionate regret* at sin, a *grief* and *sadness* at its memory, more speciously pretends to enter us into God's roll of *mourners*: Sorrow has, in vulgar acceptation, so engrost the whole notion of Repentance, that men are apt to secure themselves, that the wind of a penitential *sigh* is so mighty, as will blow away the guilt of the most mountainous *sin*; that if they have but *wept* a little upon their crimes, they have quite *extinguish'd* the wrath they kindled: But alas! these are vain dreams; *God*, who *delights not to grieve the children of men*, does not project for our sorrow, but our innocence; and would never have invited us to the one, but as an expedient to the other. 'Tis natural even to mere *animals*, to shun that by which they have smarted, and therefore sorrow for sin is a very proper means to avert our appetite from it: But if we have learnt the unhappy skill of separating the *effect* from the *cause*, if our grief abate not our love; if we can cast kind looks at our sins, even through those tears wherewith our eyes are glaz'd, this will sure be as far from accomplishing our design, as God's; leave us equally unpardon'd, as unreform'd.

Some place Repentance only in external grief and sorrow for sin.

6. Nay, alas! such sorrows as these will rather serve to *enhanse*, than *expiate* our guilts; they are loud witnesses against us, that we know the malignity of those sins we commit; that we have poiz'd them, and find them as a *talent of lead* upon our souls, and yet prefer them before Christ's *light burthen*: That we have out-vied that perverse election wherewith *Elihu* charges *Job*, and chosen *affliction* rather than *innocence*, Job 36. 21. And though we have felt the *gnawing of the worm*, yet still resolve to cherish it, till it gains its woful concomitant of *unquenchable fire*; and sure this resolvedness, this high *fortitude* in sin, can with no reason be imagin'd a preparative to its remission, 'twill rather serve to list us among Satan's *martyrs*, than God's *penitents*.

Mere sorrow without amendment doth but aggravate our guilt,

7. And indeed if we examine the original of this kind of *sorrow*, what is there that can with any face pretend to an acceptation? Alas! 'tis apparent there is no dislike to the sin; for the natural effect of that, would be the abandoning it. If I have fall'n into the mire, common Reason directs me, not to sit down and cry that I am so defiled; but to cleanse and wash my self, and beware of such another misadventure. Now God's enmity is purely with the sin; and if we think to contract a league with him, we must espouse his quarrel, hate what he hates: But in this case 'tis quite otherwise, we dislike only the *consequence*, not the *crime*; are dissatisfied to see that what is so pleasant, will not be safe; detest those temporal or eternal miseries, which God has annext to it: Which is upon the matter to grieve not because we are *guilty*, but God is *just*; and to avert only that part of the *evil*, of which he owns to be the author, that of *punishment*; whilst that of *sin*, as our own creature, we dandle and caress. And can we think it sufficient to atone an incensed Majesty, that we love our own ease, while yet we love our sin so much better? Is it a *virtue* to have some ineffective regrets to damnation, and such a virtue too, as shall serve to ballance all our vices? This were indeed a compendious course to block up hell gates, and leave none a possibility of ever getting thither, but those who scaled the wall, and desperately resolved to possess themselves of that place of *torment*. But alas! they are other *fruits* of Repentance that must *deliver us from the wrath to come*: For though I deny not, that the *apprehension* of danger is extremely both reasonable and useful, yet 'tis only by way of *preparative*; 'tis like the *trumpet* that gives the *alarm*, and sets us to the *battel*, but it must not pretend to be like those of *Gideon*, that atchiev'd the whole victory. To see our *danger*, may occasion, but does not cause, or necessarily infer an *escape*. I may madly leap into that pit which I see gaping to swallow me, and then my *foresight* serves only to render me my own *murderer*. In short, if that formidable aspect of our sins make us run from them, it has done us the happiest office; *pluckt us*, as St. *Jude* says, *out of the fire*: But if our love be so doting, as to counter-charm our fear, if we be so bewitcht with the *deceitfulness of sin*, that we will have its embraces, though we know them *deadly*; if we weep that we have sinned, and yet go on to sin, our wilful *guilt* will defile our *tears*, but our tears will never cleanse our guilt. We only assist in the judicature against our selves; and to God's condemnation add our own: And what we call our penitence, becomes a sad attestation of our incorrigibleness.

and is of no avail towards our pardon.

8. And as this *mere sorrow* will never avail, so neither will a *partial* and *imperfect reformation*, and that whether it be defective in respect of the *kind*, or of the *duration*: To the former we have spoken elsewhere, and shall not need to repeat: But of the latter there will need no less caution; men being apt to obtrude fallacies on themselves in this, as much as in the other. Every transient *gleam* of piety is concluded to be that *flame* in which the Holy Ghost descended, and though it want the main

Partial Obedience is likewise defective and short of true Repentance.

circumstance of resting on them, yet serves to personate the Comforter. He that whilst the soreness of his late pangs of *conscience* remains, finds himself a little indispos'd for a new career in sin, presently concludes *repentance* hath had its perfect work in him, made that *change* and transmutation, which certainly denominates him a *new creature*, and pronounces his *vicious appetites extinct* and *mortified:* When alas! they are but strew'd over with a little *penitential ashes*, and will as soon as they meet with *combustible matter*, any apt temptation, *flame out* as fierce as ever: And God knows the event does too often actually attest this, after all the ablutions, and purification of their repentance, their next work is to divest themselves of their white robe, and those whom yesterday you saw in the *laver*, to day you shall find wallowing in the *mire:* And as with far the more *guilt*, so sometimes with much the greater *confidence*, for having been so washt. Yet so strongly are some mens fancies possest with their imaginary purity, that they are the last that take notice how the scene is chang'd: They comfort themselves, that sin and they have had some little *skirmishes*, though but preparatory to a closer *league*; that they had fix'd good purposes, though there remain nothing visible but their violation; and so will call themselves Christ's *sheep*, though their notorious impurities witness them to belong only to that *herd* into which the *Legion* entred.

These mistakes are occasion'd by a wrong method of quieting peoples Consciences,

9. This is a deceit which one would think should immediately detect it self, but 'tis strange to see, how our *wishes* can prescribe to our *faith*; and what a more than omnipotent power our self-love has in reconciling contradictions: Yet I can scarce think this innate strength of corruption had been sufficient for the purpose, had it not had the auxiliary aid of some commodious doctrines. My present design is so far from controversial, that I am loth to point out any to which I must express unkindness: Yet upon this occasion I shall refer it to consideration, whether that method which has been us'd to quiet *some* consciences, be not very apt to stupifie *more*. When I see one who from his present reigning sins, regularly infers the illness of his state; that is yet by his casuist diverted from that prospect, and bid look back to see, whether no part of his life afforded any evidence of true grace; and if he can but remember any such time, is warranted to make that his *Epocha*, from whence to date his *infallible assurance*; is told that that *immortal seed*, though it may be covered, yet cannot be choked, but will most certainly spring up unto *eternal life:* When, I say, I see this easie remedy prescrib'd to his fears, 'twill be obvious for me to compound my self an *antidote* from the same *ingredients*; to fix my eye upon some *mark* of regeneration, which at some time or other, I either have, or fansied to have had upon me, and with the stedfast beholding of that, as of the *brazen Serpent*, be fortified against all the *venom of my fiery lusts:* Cast in this one stick, and with it sweeten all the waters of *Marah*, secure me against all the bitter effects of my present guilts. How fatal an influence such discoursings as these are apt to have on practice, is too obvious both in the cause and effect: I need not examine the authority of that grand principle on which they are founded; since if that were admitted, yet it will not justifie the before mentioned superstructure: For suppose it received as an infallible truth, that grace if true can never be lost; yet 'tis by the confession of all, so easie to be deceiv'd in judging what is so, and our partialities to our selves are so likely to betray us to that deceit, that these *corollaries* men deduce thence for their personal assurance, can never partake of the suppos'd infallibility, of those premisses they derive from, and consequenely are much too slight a *basis* for men to trust with so great a *weight*, as is that of their *present comfort* and *future state.*

and by deferring, or putting off the work of Repentance till sickness or death.

10. Several other pernicious errors there are in the matter of *Repentance*, which men fall into, shall I say, or rather aspire to; make it their ambition to be under their covert and patronage, and with extreme violence to their *reason*, as well as *religion*, climb up to those castles in the air, and there fortifie themselves impregnably against all the sacred artillery of divine threats. Their *false confidences* serve them as *feather beds*, not only to sleep securely in, but to *dead all bullets* that are shot against them. But of all those deceitful *refuges*, there is none more treacherous, and yet more confidently and universally resorted to, than that of a *Repentance in reversion*, to commence no body knows when, some months or years hence, when this business is dispatch'd, that lust satiated; or indeed to bear the same date (if not a later) with their last will and testament. This is that unhappy retreat to which *thousands fly* as the routed *Syrians* to *Aphek*, 1 Kings 20. 30. till they are intomb'd in that *wall*, whose shelter they solicited: How desperate the hazard of such procrastination is, hath been so convincingly demonstrated by better pens; that *trumpet* hath been blowed so loud by all our spiritual *watchmen*, that there remains nothing seasonable, but to wonder whence men have got that *Lethe*, which secures them their sleep in spight of that *alarm:*

 And

And certainly 'tis matter of the greatest astonishment, to observe the stupid, yet common boldness of men, who so fearlesly expose themselves to this most formidable of perils; who yet in things of far less danger and lighter consequence, are so nicely timorous, that no security is thought enough; every the remotest danger to their outward concerns, excites their present vigilance to avert it: But here that order is most absurdly inverted, and the *present imminent danger* is assign'd and put off to their *future care*. Let the *physician* tell them he observes some symptoms of a latent *malady*, some aptitudes or first causes of a *disease*; what haste is there made to meet that enemy *in the frontiers*, before it advance too far? All arts of prevention are us'd, and such uneasie *remedies* submitted to, as perhaps out-bid the *pain* of the disease. In like manner, let a *lawyer* tell them he has spied some defect in an *entail*, which may perhaps in the next age give some interruption to their design of having their houses endure for ever, *Psal.* 47. how solicitous are they to repair that *error*, and leave nothing to the mercy of a *Law-quirk?* and in both cases thank the vigilant care of their informer, that gave them notice of their danger: But let the *Divine* tell them, he sees their souls languishing under the most mortal diseases; that they have actually forfeited their *inheritance* in the land of the living, they can hear it unconcernedly; say, or at least think those cares are to be remitted to *Felix* his more convenient season, that when their *bodies* are as infirm as their *souls*, then care may be taken for both together. That 'tis enough for their *spiritual* life to commence, when the *natural* is expiring, and then to provide for everlasting habitations, when they are putting off their *earthly* tabernacle. As for the thanks they give their *monitor*, 'tis generally the same that St. *Paul* received from the *Galatians*, to count him their *enemy for telling them the truth*, Gal. 4. 16. but alas! he has no reason to resent the injury, since 'tis but the same they offer to their nearest and most intimate friend, that *Angel guardian* which God and nature has placed within their own breasts, I mean their *conscience*: Let that at any time whisper the same admonition, and immediately they cry out, as *Ahab* to *Elijah*, *Hast thou found me, O my enemy?* All arts are us'd to convey themselves out of its reach. Business, or company, or drink, or any thing is solicited to come in to their rescue, that in that throng they may deceive its pursuit, or at least in that louder noise drown its voice; and is not this to look on it as their enemy, while they shun it as a *malefactor* does the *officer?* yet I appeal to the breasts of those, who lean upon the broken reed of a late *Repentance*, whether this be not the case with them: Let them tell me, whether they dare trust themselves alone with their *conscience*, give it opportunity of speaking freely to them, of having before them the mad adventure they make of their precious *souls*; which they do not only expose to as many hazards of a *swift damnation*, as there are accidents which may surprize their *bodies* with a *sudden death*; but do besides by this resistance repel and quench that *Spirit*, without which they can never hope to effect that so necessary, so difficult a *work*; nay, I may, I fear, ask of them, whether they have not so often shunned these parleys, that their *consciences*, like an *abus'd friend*, has at last given them over, ceas'd to pursue them with more of those unwelcome importunities; and by its silence left them secur'd from all noise which may disturb that treacherous sleep, into which they have lulled themselves? To those who are thus given up to the *spirit of slumber*, I cannot hope to speak loud enough to rouse them; but to those that are but of the former rank, that have not yet so prosper'd in their unkind design against themselves, as quite to have alienated their bosom friend, that are yet within the reach of those *amica verbera*, the stripes and reproofs of their own conscience; to such I would address with this most affectionate *petition*, that they would not seek to remove themselves from that *wholsom discipline*; that they would not fly that *chirurgeon*, whose *lancet* threatens none but the *imposthumated parts*; but rather choose to be shewed the formidableness of their danger, than by a blind embracing it, to perish in it. And if they have but any general confus'd inclinations to this so reasonable a request, I shall then put on more solemnity, assume to come as an *envoy* from those dreaded consciences of theirs, to *mediate* an interview, to propose the fixing some time of parley, and bespeak their *patience* to hear it out: And let them but grant this, let them but dare to do so much in order to their own safety, and I can scarce think it possible they should after retain that daring, which only tends to their ruin. In a word, let men seriously and attentively listen to that *voice* within them, and they will certainly need no other *medium*, to convince them either of the error, or danger of thus procrastinating their *Repentance*, which themselves acknowledge must not upon their utmost peril be finally omitted, and yet nothing but an immediate dispatch can secure it shall not.

True Repentance must be universal, lasting, present and undelay'd.

11. 'Twill be needless to descend to a particular view of more of these deceits, they will easily be detected by this one *general rule*; That whatsoever falls short of a present, universal, permanent change, falls as much short of *Repentance*. All the pretences that are made upon any other score, are but as the garments of the *elder brother*, put upon the back of the *younger*, which though they might delude a blind *Isaac*, will never be able to deceive an all-seeing *God*. All that remains is to offer to the reader's consideration, how nearly he is concern'd to guard himself against all delusions in this so important an affair. It was an ancient *stratagem* of war, to poison the waters in an enemy's camp, that so they may drink their own deaths: But *Satan* has here far outvied that *policy*. Were but our nourishment infected, we had still a recourse left us to medicine; but here he has envenomed our very physick, and what *cure* remains for those whose very *remedies* are their *disease?* When that bath which was design'd to cleanse us, is it self polluted, we may well cry out as *Dionysius* of the corrupted river of *Alexandria*, ποῖον γένοιτο ἂν πάντα καθαῖρον ὕδατος ὕδωρ ἄλλο καθάρσιον; *What flood shall cleanse these waters?* Where can we be secure, when our *Repentance* (which the Apostle, 2 *Tim.* 2. 26. supposes the means of disingtangling us) is it self become a snare? This, as it loudly proclaims our *danger*, so surely in all reason it should awake our *care*, teach us not to suffer our selves to be abus'd with delusive appearances and shadows of *Repentance*, lest we finally find that *Ixion* like, we have embraced a cloud. What an amazing defeat will it be to him, who presumes his tears have blotted out the *hand-writing* against him, to find the full bill brought in at the great Assize, and those he call'd his *penitential sorrows* here, to prove but the prologue to that *tragedy*, which ends in *weeping and gnashing of teeth!* And therefore let every one timely provide against that fatal surprize, use this excellent receipt, not as a *cosmetick*, only to beautifie the face, give him some fair appearance to himself; but as *medicine*, to restore health; reduce him to such an *athletick* vigorous habit, as may evidence it self in all *vital* actions, which will prove the best evidences in our last trial, where the inquisition will not be so much upon our mouths or eyes, as upon our hands; not how many *confessions* we have made, or how many *tears* shed, but what *acts* of virtue we have substituted in the room of our vices: Whether we have broken off our sins by *righteousness*, and our iniquities by *shewing mercy to the poor*; and without this 'tis infallibly certain, our Christianity will be as ineffectual to our *bliss*, as it is to our *piety*: If we will not permit it here to bring us to the *obedience* of servants, it shall never instate us hereafter in the *inheritance* of sons.

CHAP. VIII.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Mistakes concerning Almighty God, and the methods of his Providence.

Mistakes concerning God are dangerous.

1. TO these Mistakes of our selves and interests we have added others also concerning God, which are no less destructive to Christian practice; for as the *right knowledge of God is by our Saviour*, John 17. 3. put as the epitome and summ of all that leads to *bliss*, so our misprisions and misapprehensions of him, are no less remarkable for the contrary effects; nor can we suppose it otherwise, when we remember that this is the grand work and *basis* of all Religion, and therefore if this *foundation* be deceitfully laid, the *superstructure* must necessarily sink and perish: And in this sense 'tis possible for us at once to build on the *rock*, and the *sand* too; we may fix our faith intentionally on God, and yet by absurd notions and unwarranted conceits of him, defeat in the particulars what we establish'd in the gross; represent him so utterly distant from what he is, that under that disguise he will not much appear either an encourager or rewarder of our *piety*, and then we may guess how 'tis likely to flourish, since the Apostle gives it as a *fundamental axiom*, Heb. 11. 6. That *he who comes to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them which diligently seek him.*

Three instances of these Mistakes.

2. Of these Mistakes concerning God, there are divers; many more than the design'd brevity of this discourse will admit me to examine. I shall only mention *three*, those are, First, concerning his *Decrees*; secondly, his *Attributes*, thirdly, his *Providence*.

3. By his *Decrees*, I mean not those standing *rules* which he has in his Word set forth, as the *measures* by which he will distribute rewards and punishments; but those secret *purposes of his will*, which he neither commands us to search after, nor will permit us to know. That there are many mistakes concerning these, the numberless disputes that have been rais'd about them will sufficiently attest, it being impossible for two contradictory opinions to be both *true*, though in things of this abstruse nature, 'tis very possible both may be *false*. 'Tis not my purpose to wade into those bottomless controversies, which like a gulph have swallowed up so much time and industry of learned men: I shall only in *general* commend it to the reader's consideration, whether it be probable, or indeed possible for those opinions to be *true*, which infer *falshood* in God? And then let the second enquiry be, whether that be not too evidently the result of those discourses, which set an opposition between his *revealed*, and his *secret* Will, his Commands, and his Decrees, making the one a blind for the better execution of the other? as if all the transportation and zeal he expresses *for* us, all the passionate enamouring invitations he makes *to* us, were only to sport himself with our credulity: Like the divertisement of those men, who court them for wives, whom they would abhor to marry: Nay, as if all the protestations and most solemn oaths of God, were design'd but to advance the delusion, and raise expectations, merely to defeat them. This is such a severe sort of *irony*, as we would all think not only unkind, but unjust in a man; and 'tis not possible that God, who appeals to us concerning the equality of his ways, should fall short of the strictest measures among us, or exemplifie to us an unsincerity he forbids us to follow.

The first instance of mistake is concerning God's Decrees, which they oft oppose to his reveal'd Will;

4. How very inauspicious influence such *doctrines* are apt to have on *practice*, is too visible; for since 'tis as well the instinct, as duty of our nature, to aspire to an assimilation with God, even that most laudable and generous ambition shall by this means become our snare; for when *God* shall be thus misrepresented to us, drawn out by the black lines, not only of *severity*, but *deceit*, rendred a falsifier of his *Word*, nay, *Oath*; 'twill give not only temptation, but warrant to the like practices: We shall easily swallow up all the particular Commands of God, in that fundamental one of being like him; as we are taught himself has done, both his Commands and Promises in his hidden Decrees. This is so natural a piece of *Logick*, that 'tis very unsafe men should be trusted with those *premisses*, whence 'tis deriv'd. And though we are not over apt to transcribe that copy God does really set us, yet this spurious one will not miss to be taken out, that pravity of our nature which hinders in the one, exciting and spurring us on in the other. This is a way to reconcile our vices with our reputation, and sin *cum privilegio*; and there is little doubt of mens aptness to use that advantage; we see it in lower instances. The *vices* of a prince draw sholes of followers, when his *virtue* leaves him the more eminent, because single, and renders him rather revered, than imitated: And certainly 'twas none of the Devil's slightest *stratagems* on the *Gentile* world, to give them *such gods*, as might exemplifie to them all those *odious crimes*, wherein he desir'd to immerse them. Whether this may not be a *branch* of the same illusion, I wish the propugners of this doctrine would seriously consider.

whereby they have an evil influence on mens lives and practices,

5. And as several *ills* are hereby countenanc'd and authoriz'd, so is all *virtue* in general discouraged and disheartned; this benumbs us in our Christian course, substracts that spirit and vigour, which should carry us through the weary stages of duty: Indeed it cuts the very *sinews* of industry, baffles and makes ridiculous all *purposes* of labour; for what should invite a man to strive for that, from which he knows he is either irreversibly precluded, or else so infallibly ascertain'd of, that his negligence cannot defeat him? These are such *extremes* as afford no *middle*, wherein the virtue of industry may exist, hope being equally out-dated by the desperateness or unnecessariness of an undertaking: And how necessary hope is to excite endeavour, we may learn of St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 15. 5. where he presses his *Corinthians* to the constancy of Christian practice upon this ground, that their *labours shall not be in vain in the Lord*. But according to some mens doctrine, 'tis scarce possible for a man to know whether his labour be in vain, or no: since the effect of it depends not upon the revealed *promise*, but secret *purpose* of God; and who knows whether there may not lie some *dormant decrees* against him, which when he thinks he has run his *race*, shall yet defeat him of his *crown?* Whether a reward thus stated will much animate mens diligence, I may leave every man to judge by the like circumstances in their secular concerns; and, if they find they would there damp their courage, dispirit and dishearten them from attempting, there will be sure more reason to conclude it in these *spiritual* affairs, wherein our industry is commonly much less indefatigable.

and are a great hindrance to our progress in holiness.

6. But

Dangerous to pry too curiously into God's Decrees, which are secret and unsearchable.

6. But I shall not farther insist on the ill consequences of particular mistakes; there is one *fundamental error*, which if it could be cured, would supersede all the rest; I mean our bold folly in *medling with God's Decrees*, which we call hidden, and yet ridiculously confute that epithet, by pretending to know them. This is so much an insolence, as forfeits the comparison, which might belong to is as an error; we see *secular states* jealously reserve their *private counsels*, and shall we think God so scrutable, our selves so penetrating, that none of his secrets can escape us? Or if we think him, as indeed he is, *unfathomable*, why do we thus madly attempt what we confess *impossible?* especially since we shall not only lose the thing we so vainly pursue, but others which we might else enjoy. 'Tis as if a man should be so transported with a busie earnestness of knowing his prince's *secrets*, as quite to forget his *laws*, and incur capital punishment. God has given us *rules of life*, which upon the severest penalties he requires us to study and practise; and we divert from these, and make it our business to trace his *counsels*. We are gazing at the *stars* to read our destiny, and look not to our *feet*; and by that negligence experiment the worst fate they could have portended: For I think we may say, our wild *fancies* about God's Decrees, have in event reprobated more, than those *Decrees*, upon which they are so willing to charge their ruin, and have bid fair to the damning of many, whom those left salvable. And indeed 'tis to be expected from divine justice, that such bold inquisitors should find nothing but their own destruction. That ark which devoutly reverenced brought *blessings*, when curiously pried into diffus'd *pestilence* and *death*, 1 Sam. 6. 19. Nay, the very *Poets* will tell us, that if we will have *Prometheus* his fire, we must take *Pandora*'s box also: And sure industry cannot be worse laid out, than thus to fetch home *plagues*, and while so much of it runs waste to such unhappy purposes, 'tis no wonder if we want for better; forget our *calling* by contemplating our *predestination*: and let the opinion of our *fate* be at once the encouragement and excuse of our *sloth*, than which nothing can more evacuate the purpose and design of our Christianity, which Divines have truly defin'd to be not a *contemplative*, but *active* science.

The second mistake is concerning God's Attributes, and concerning his Justice.

7. To the same unhappy effect concur our Mistakes of *God's Attributes*, if I may call them Mistakes, which seem to be rather wilful nescience, they being so delineated to us both in his word, and his providences, that 'tis not want of light, but winking against it, that must leave us ignorant. What the *speculative errors* are in this matter concerns not my present design to examine; but there seem to be some misperswasions concerning the *Divine Attributes*, which do remarkably tend in their consequence and effect, to the corrupting *mens manners*; nay, look as if they were design'd, and affectedly chosen for that purpose; I mean, especially those concerning his *Justice* and *Mercy*, which being the *Attributes* in which we have the most immediate concern, the errors in them are the more noxious and destructive. Of this sort is that narrow scanty notion too many have of *God's Justice*, which we measure not by *him*, but *our selves*, and therefore proportion it not according to his *infinity*, but our own *concerns*. That is an attribute from which we promise to our selves no advantage, and therefore we are willing to contract and shrink it up, make it serve only as a *Cypher* to advance *mercy*, but are unwilling to understand it in its proper extent; think it a *word of form* put in to complete the greatness of God's *style*, rather than any *intrinsick part of his nature*, which he must deny himself to put off.

3. Mistakes concerning God's Mercy and our unequal apprehensions thereof.

8. Thus do we sacrilegiously steal from God a part of his being, and while other Sacrileges invade only his *Patrimony*, this commits a riot upon his very *Nature*; yet as if we meant the Proverb should indemnifie us, and *exchange* extinguish the *robbery*, we add to another attribute what we have defaulk'd from this, and amplifie and extend his *Mercy*, as much as we confine and limit his *Justice*; that is the one infinite ocean, wherein not only we, but himself must be swallowed up. We will think of him under no other notion, nor allow him to be any other thing, but what shall be in subserviency to this: We will have him powerful to *relieve* our distresses, but not to *revenge* our crimes; wise to *defeat* the machinations of our enemies, but not to *circumvent* our own indirect, or impious policies; all-seeing to *behold* our wants and Griefs, but not to *discern* our closer guilts; true to *perform* his promises, but not his threats. In short, we model all that is in God to our own wishes; and instead of believing him what he is, fancy him what we would have him. Like *Micha*, *Judg.* 17. 5, *making us a God* for our own peculiar use, and forming the Deity we mean to worship. A strange bold inversion for creatures thus to fashion their Creator, put their own stamp or impress upon him, and shape him to their fancies! And indeed, 'tis nothing but *fancy* that has to do in this attempt, and accordingly it must vanish as the *operations* of that illusive faculty use to do. We may represent God to our selves as

we please, but that has no more real *influence* on him, than a *deforming optick Glass* has on the *Object* it disguises, he is still *the same* amidst all our wild conceits of him, and will always make good the *title*, by which he delivered himself to *Moses*, *Exod.* 3. 14. *I am that I am.* All that is in him is equally immense and infinite, his *mercy* need not invade his *justice* to gain it self a larger field of action, which is already (as the *Psalmist* speaks) *over all his works*; neither his *justice* encroach upon his *mercy*, that having also a province wide enough; all impenitent sinners being within its verge, and God knows how much soever we straiten it in our *opinions*, we do indeed too much extend it in its *real force*, by rendring our selves the proper objects of it. In short, God who is the author of *order* and *peace*, cannot be suppos'd to be in *confusion* within himself; the divine attributes are not in *strife*, but perfect *harmony*; 'tis we only that have rais'd this more than *gigantick War*, not only *against* Heaven but *in* it. The several *Luminaries* pursue the regular motions of the *Spheres*; but we confound at once the *laws* of their Creation, and their *Author* too, strive to eclipse and darken *the Father of light.* But if the removing of an earthly land-mark be a crime punishable both by God and Man, what thunder-bolts belong to those who thus attempt to set new boundaries to Heaven, to limit and measure out even the *divine Nature*, by the proportions of their own *fancies?* And indeed such temerity as this, is too like to confute it self, and feel that justice it will not believe; yet as great and daring a crime as it is, I fear there are few that can totally acquit themselves of it; for though all disavow it, yet he that shall narrowly search his own heart, will scarce find it clear from all degrees of it. We are all apt to cherish a *flattering hope*, that God is not so severe as he is represented, or that, if in respect of his justice he be a *consuming power*, yet that mercy will be sure to snatch us out of the *burning*; like the Angels to *Lot*, assist our escapes, and provide us a *Zoar, that our Souls may live*. And this hope, though founded only in our *wishes*, is very apt to slide into our *faith*, and make us believe what we would have; by which means this becomes a kind of *epidemick* Heresie, the most frequent and common mispersuasion that occurs concerning the divine Attributes.

9. It would be a work more long than useful, to recite the several errors that have sprung from this one. That of *Origen*, that *the Devils should finally be saved*, is a noted and pregnant instance, which could be deriv'd from nothing but this unequal apprehension of God's Justice and Mercy: And besides all other ancient, we have many branches of a later growth, that spring from the same root, a set of plausible falsities, which would quench the *unquenchable fire*, and kill the never *dying worm*; I mean those allaying, softning descriptions some of this age have made of Hell, some changing the *kind*, others abating the *intenseness*, or at least the *duration* of those torments, each substracting so much from this *Tophet*, that they have left *atheism* an easie task to take away the rest; and may give suspicion they mean to visit that place, which they are so industrious to make easie.

Which hath given occasion to several dangerous errors in Religion, and particularly about the nature and duration of Hell torments;

10. But whatever they do *themselves*, 'tis sure this is the way to send *others* thither, to take off their fears of it, to make them think it not so dreadful a place as they once suppos'd, and consequently less careful to decline the ways that lead to it. 'Tis indeed too obvious that such persuasions do mightily impugn Christian practice, and embolden men in sin: And God knows we need no such encouragement; the more general fallacious hopes of mercy being too sufficient for that purpose, without these supernumerary deceits: But between the one and the other, *libertinism* is like to outgrow all restraints, and the opinion of *God's goodness*, instead of *leading men to repentance*, will slacken those reins wherewith our brutish nature should be bridled and restrain'd, and we thus left unto the sway of lust and passion, must run headlong upon ruin, *as the horse rusheth into the battel.* For alas! we are not so *generous* as to do well for virtue's sake, nay, nor so *provident* as to do it for reward; 'tis our fear that is the most prevalent incentive, and accordingly we find Religion generally makes her first impressions there. They are *the terrors of the Lord* that do most usually and most effectually *persuade men*, 2 Cor. 5. 11. our hearts must be pricked, and at those orifices piety enters. Now when all these terrors shall be superseded by the opinion of an overwhelming mercy, when *Hell* shall either be annihilated, or suppos'd so to annihilate us, that we shall lose our passiveness with our being, and be as uncapable of suffering, as even *Heaven* it self can make us, what will be left to engage us to *virtue*, or deter us from *vice?* Alas! do we not often see a daring lust bid *battel* to all the artillery of Heaven, meet *God* in his loudest thunder, and venture on *damnation* in its dreadfullest form? And can we think it will be more modest, when it shall be told that they are only edgeless weapons it hath to encounter? That God's thunder amidst all its noise carries no *bolt?* And that the flames of the bottomless pit are but a *painted*

which is apt to abate the fear and terror thereof in the minds of bad men,

fire,

fire, that at a distance may fright, but not hurt us, or at least so hurt us, that we shall not feel it? When those rubs which fear interpos'd are thus removed, there is nothing to stay the course of headlong riot, but precipitiously it will on, wherever *strong desire* shall drive, or *flattering lust* allure: He that loved his sin, even when it threatned him *ruin*, serv'd it assiduously, when it promised no other wages than *death*, Rom. 6. 23. how will he hug this *viper*, when he thinks 'tis stingless, and give up his ear to be bored by that *Master*, which affords him present pleasures without future stripes? We see even in civil matters, the *presumption* of impunity is the great *nurse* of disorders, and if it were not for the *coercive* power of laws, we should soon see how little the *directive* would signifie; and doubtless 'tis the same in spiritual, or rather worse, by how much we are more bent upon the breaking of God's Laws, than mens, and consequently will be the more apprehensive of any encouragement.

and encourageth them to sin thro' hopes of impunity.

11. Of the truth hereof our experience gives too sad proof, none rushing so boldly upon God's *justice*, as those who have most fortified themselves against the *dread* of it, as if they meant their *practice* should experiment the truth of their *speculation*, and make the utmost trial whether God can be provok'd, or no. Indeed men use *mercy* as amaz'd passengers sometimes do a *plank* in a shipwreck, lay so much weight upon it, as sinks both it and themselves; so perishing by too great a confidence of their rescue, and finding a *gulph*, where they expected an *ark*: Not that I suppose mercy unable to support the weight of all the *persons*, nay, and of all the *sins* in the world, which have not the one ponderous *adherent* of impenitence superadded; but that is a burthen which even the divine *clemency* sinks under, refuses to plead such a cause, and refers it to *Justice*, as its proper court: And therefore to sin on, in hope of mercy, is to undermine our selves, and commit a folly as absurd as ruinous; I wish I could say, 'twere not also as frequent, but God knows 'tis every where too apparent; men openly avow it, so that 'tis become the vulgar answer to every convicting reproof, That *God is merciful*: And surely they that observe the growth of vice, since our new descriptions of Hell came abroad, will have cause to think the one has had no small influence on the other, and that while some have made it borrow the uneasiness of our human state to make up its torments, they have taken care it should be just, and lend us back sins of a greater magnitude. This miserable traffick have these factors settled between the present world and the infernal region, that Hell should have earth's *pains*, and earth Hell's *wickedness*; the latter alas! we are too fully possest of, which is like to send too many souls to discover the deceit of the other. In fine, our groundless confidences of mercy, and those other *Chimæra*'s we forge out of that, are certainly the most frequent and dangerous underminers of Christian practice: These, like the *sun* give heat and vigour to those inordinate lusts, which a just *fear of vengeance* would as a winter's frost, nip, and destroy: And till we lay by these easie slight thoughts of God, and consider him in those more awful attributes which exact our reverence, his *mercy* will only serve to ripen us for his judgment; that smooth and gentle property in God, which to all who abuse it not is indeed the *oil of gladness*, will thus perverted acquire the more fatal quality of oil, serve only to intend our *flames*, and remove us as far from the *rewards* of piety, as our bold *fancies* have done from the *practice*.

Mistakes concerning the Providence of God, and first, In those that deny a Providence;

12. A third sort of mistakes there are, by which piety is obstructed, and those are such as concern *God's Providence*, about which the world has long since had many disputes; some entirely denying it, as presuming God so wholly taken up with the contemplation and enjoyment of his own felicity, that he is utterly inconsiderate of that of his creatures, and an unconcern'd *spectator* of human affairs; others limiting and restraining it to those things only, which themselves were pleased to think worthy of the divine inspection and conduct: But these questions have been more bandied among *Philosophers*, than *Christians*, and therefore are beyond our present enquiry. Yet give me leave by the way to express my fears, that these errors have yet some secret rooting in too many hearts; that there are many who rather formally *say*, than cordially *believe*, that God governs the world, and disposes as well of *human*, as *divine* things; a suspicion that is rendred too probable by those indirect arts men use, to possess themselves of secular advantages; for did they seriously think, that all those things are in God's hands, from whence they are neither strong nor cunning enough either to wrest, or pilfer them, 'tis scarce imaginable they should attempt such painful impossibilities, disquiet themselves in vain, as the *Psalmist* speaks, and which is worse, forfeit all title to them as God's gifts, by thus assuming to make them their own. But this is a disquisition I must leave every man to make in his own heart; only let me say, that he that has there any doubt of God's universal or particular Providence,

has also in it the root of all *unchristian sins*, of distrust, solicitude, and fraud; there being nothing that can effectually supersede our own carkings and contrivances for our selves, but the assurance that God cares for us. Men being still apt to scramble, where there is none from whom they expect an orderly and sufficient distribution; and therefore this error, wherever it is found, may well be reckon'd among the impeders of Christian duty.

13. But besides those who thus doubt of providence, there are others liable to great mistakes, I mean those who to their *just belief* of God's providence, superadd a *groundless confidence* of their own skill in fathoming it; that are not content to know it in its *product* and event, but pretend to discern it in its most secret *designments* and purposes; and do not so much *reverse* God's dispensations, as *interpret* them. I do not here mean to condemn all *particular applications* of providential events, which are sometimes so extraordinary and remarkable, that they are their own *expositors*, and point out the *construction* we are to make; and an humble advertence unto such, is not only innocent, but necessary: But when men shall attempt to read every line in *God's hand*, to make their own inference from every efflux of providence; these pretenders to *divine palmistry* seem to differ only thus much from those who make a trade of the *natural*, that they cheat *themselves* as well as *others*.

2. In such as go about to fathom the depths of it:

14. Yet there want not some who have gone yet farther, and think not only to *understand* providence, but *assist* it; not only trace it in all its intricate windings, and concealed *intendments*, but help it in the execution, and give birth to its *conceptions*: Of this sort especially are those, who having possest their brains with some conjectural expositions of obscure prophesies, will administer to providence, and call out those events they expect; and as if they were conscious that God would not make good their dreams, endeavour to do it themselves. This age has afforded too many instances of this, when the *fulfilling of prophecies* has by some been made the solemn summons to *rebellion and blood:* And in order to the *hating and destroying of the whore*, Rev. 17. 1. men have been animated to hate and destroy all who were not infected with their own frenzy. This we know has been call'd the *helping of the Lord against the mighty*, and something more than votive curses awarded to those who refused to assist. Thus have they first wildly mistaken, and then no less wildly out-run God's designs; as if like *Baal*, Judg. 6. he were unable to plead for himself, to vindicate his own cause, or effect his purposes without their help; and having resolved what he shall do, obtrude themselves upon him as his instruments; how repugnant such *anticipations* of providence are to the *interests* of Christianity, is too apparent from the many *detestable effects* they have produc'd.

3. In others that would have a hand in the execution of it.

15. But setting aside these, let us return to those we spake of before; who presuming to expound providential events, make them the *Criterion* by which to judge both of *persons*, and of *causes*; concluding the one loved or hated, the other approved or disallowed by God, according to their *prosperous* or *adverse* success. The first of these was by our Saviour exploded, as an undue way of process in the *Jews*, in the case of the *Galileans*, and before him *Solomon* had given it as a maxim, that *no man could know love or hatred by all that is before him*, Eccles. 9. 1. And if under the *Jewish Oeconomy*, where temporal blessings made up so great a part of their promises, it was so; much more is it under the *Gospel*, whose frame and composure is quite distant; which instead of proposing secular prosperities to its *proselytes*, assures them the contrary; sets up the cross as the standard under which they are to fight, and affords no temporal hopes, but with an allaying *proviso* of persecutions and afflictions; nay, the Apostle to the *Hebrews* goes farther, makes them not only *incident*, but *necessary* to Christians, the badge and cognizance of sonship, whilst the *no chastening* is the fatallest sign, *a token of bastardy* and abdication, *Heb.* 12. 7, 8. And doubtless the experience of every Christian asserts the doctrine; we are all apt with the *Prodigal* to forsake our father's house, and as long as we can have the riot, and not the wants, shall never think of returning; we must be famish'd into consideration, and our *husks* alone will send us home to the *fatted calf*. And can there be a greater indulgence in God, than thus to make our iniquity our punishment, that it may not be our ruin? to embitter those sensualities, whose lusciousness serves to intoxicate us, and to clip those wings which he sees carry us from him? Stories tell us that the *Trojan* wives, after the *destruction* of their country, being wearied with their restless vagrant life, necessitated their husbands to a *settlement* by *burning* their ships. And the same kind stratagem God has upon us: He sees that our worldly accessions do rather enlarge, than fill our appetites, and carry us on to farther pursuits; and by drawing us still more from him the center of rest, expose us to endless wandrings; and en what can be kinder than

God's favour not to be concluded either way from the events of Providence.

to rescue us from such a condition, that curse of *Cain*, to be a *fugitive and a vagabond in the earth?* to deprive us of our treacherous prosperities, and fire those ships wherein we are preparing, like *Jonah*, to *flee from the presence of the Lord*; so by a happy necessity forcing us to fix our selves on him? And this is the worst God designs us in every adversity: And did we mean but as well to our selves, we should not miss of receiving the happiest effects, even that *peaceable fruit of righteousness* the Apostle speaks of, *Heb.* 12. This holy men so well understood, that we find them dread nothing so much as an uninterrupted prosperity; they, like the *Muscovite* women, grew jealous of God's love, when he forbare to strike; upon which score it is, that in the ancient fathers there are so many solemn petitions for stripes, such importunate solicitations for the *medicinal corrections*, wherein they judg'd both God's *kindness*, and their own *safety* to consist.

We must not judge of his love by worldly prosperity;

16 And then how perverse, how preposterous are our measures, when we conclude quite the other way, estimate *God's love* only from *outward successes*, and think he is never angry but when he smites? A perswasion, which as it is very false in its *grounds*, so very pernicious in its *effects*, and creates hopes and fears as fallacious as it self. For first, if we apply it to our selves, it produces mischiefs proportionable to the divers states under which we are. If a man be *full* and *prosperous*, it makes him *proud* and *secure*; for when he has not only the possession of those things the world values, but takes them as an attestation of God's peculiar kindness and approbation, what should make him either consider or reform his guilts? If he have sanctity enough to possess him of God's favour, and all these profitable effects of it, he will not easily be persuaded he needs more: And any man that shall tell him he does, shall be heard with the same indignation wherewith *Crœsus* entertain'd *Solon*, when he found him question that happiness, which he expected he should have *admir'd*. Prosperity is in it self an emboldening thing, but when back'd by this opinion of it, grows into all insolence, till at last it even recoil in the face of the donor, and dare God by all those enormous riots, to which it *enables men*.

nor of his hatred by outward crosses and affliction.

17. On the other side, this opinion presents a less *merry*, but not less *dangerous* temptation to those in adversity; for when they shall look on *themselves* only as the *anvil* for God's strokes, they will be too apt to compleat the *parallel*, by answering it in *hardness* and inflexibility; have the ἀντίτυπον νοῦν, as the Father calls it, which reverberates the blow on him that gave it. Persevering wickedness is so naturally the issue of desperation, that we find the *Jews* take up the one merely to countenance the other, pretend *hopelesness* to avoid *reformation*: Thus we find it, *Ezek*. 33. 10. *Our iniquities are upon us, and we pine away in them; how should we live?* And again more plainly, *Jer*. 18. 12. *There is no hope*, and then the inference is ready, *Let us walk every one in his own ways*. Endeavour is the child of hope, and we attempt not to atone one whom we conclude implacable: So that wrath may consume, but will never melt us; 'tis love only that has that *softning* dissolving power, and unless we discern a mixture of that in God's *inflictions*, they will never render us *malleable* to his *impressions*. We kiss a father's hand and rod, when an executioner's stroke we suffer rather than bear. St. *John* tells us, *we love God because he lov'd us*, 1 John 4. 19. I wish all men would make good the inference; but 'tis sure they are too apt to do it in the reverse, and will hate, if they apprehend themselves hated; a state which at once exemplifies, and anticipates the worst part of *Hell* to us, yet very incident to those who interpret every stroke of God's, as the effect of enmity and utter aversion. This is to do that to ourselves which the *Devils* so deprecate from Christ, to *torment us before our time*; it being peculiar to the vengeance of the other world to be merely punitive, that here being rather *discipline*, than *vengeance*, design'd to reduce, not destroy us: And indeed besides the *pain of sense* which this error creates, it does (to perfect the Hell) give that *of loss* also; deprives us of one of the great evangelical *felicities*, that of *rejoycing in tribulations*, which our Saviour thought so considerable, as to insert amongst his beatitudes: And his Apostles frequently mention it triumphantly as the great *privilege* and *prerogative* of a Christian. For if all adverse successes be a note of God's disfavour, there will be no place for joy, even in the most pious sufferings. St. *Stephen*'s ravishing prospect will be intercepted, and a *martyr*'s death be as uncomfortable as a *malefactor*'s. But if these were the only sufferings to which joy were annext, there would be but too few concern'd in the deprivation; those wherein we are more universally interessed, are those chastisements of God which our guilts provoke; which though in respect of their *cause*, they are matters of the greatest sadness, yet in regard of their significancy and *effect*, they are grounds of comfort; they signifie that God (however displeas'd) yet has not abandoned the care of us; thinks us worth

his

his *correction*, and designs our *reducement*: And the effect will (if not obstructed by us) be answerable to that design: our *chastening* here rescues us from the *sins*, and consequently the *condemnation of the world*, 1 *Cor*. 11. 32. and this is sure no slight motive of rejoycing; and we are very unjust to God and our selves, if we will exchange it for the sullen murmurs of a desperate incorrigibleness.

18. And as this persuasion is thus *pernicious* in reflection on *our selves*, so neither is it more *innocent* when applied to *others*; for first, if we look on the men that prosper in the world, as the *Psalmist* speaks, *Psal*. 73. 12. we shall too often find them answer the *character* he gives them in the former part of the *Psalm*; and when from their temporal affluence we shall conclude God's favour to them, 'twill be hard resisting the *temptation*, which (without that argument) the *Psalmist* was under, of thinking it *vain to cleanse our hearts, or wash our hands in innocency*. Nay, we shall be apt to joyn our suffrage to those in *Malachy* 3. 15. and call the *proud*, *happy*: and if we esteem them so, 'tis natural to desire to be like them; so we shall quickly grow to despise a poor, or *afflicted innocence*, and embrace all thriving *prosperous sins*.

Not to envy any man for his prosperous estate,

19. On the other side, if we look on others in an adverse calamitous state, this opinion suggests hard and severe sentences concerning them, inclines us to judge, where we should succour; and how great an accumulation of misery that is, we may learn from *Job*, whom we find not so often nor so passionately complaining of any of his *pressures*, as of the unkind *censures* of his friends, who weighing in this deceitful balance of temporal successes, made very false judgments of him, and as if they were to glean after Satan, endeavoured to despoil him of that only comfort his malice had left, the conscience of his innocency. This is, as the *Psalmist* speaks, *to persecute him whom God has smitten*, and *to talk to the grief of those whom he hath wounded*; a thing repugnant to the common temper of humanity, and much more to that tenderness, those affections and bowels Christianity requires; and therefore in this respect also, we may reckon this persuasion very injurious to Christian duty.

nor misjudge him for any trouble or calamity that may befal him here.

20 Nor is it less so, when applied to *Causes*, in which it is full as deceitful a rule as it is in *Persons*: God has design'd us another measure of our undertakings, his *word* and *law*, by the general proportions whereof we are to square and accommodate our particular *actions*: He sends us not to his *providence*, and the various distributions of that, or allows us to judge of the *Justice*, by the success of our *Attempts*. If that were the trial, 'twere impossible for any enterprize to be lawful, since that, which should legitimate it, is subsequent to it, and can have no influence on it, to the making it good or bad: And as it does not make, so neither does it infallibly signifie it to be either; and of those who presume it does, I should ask whence it came to do so? If by any assignation of God, let them produce it; and if not thence, I am sure it can make no pretence to certainty, God having no where oblig'd his *Providence* to make good our *fancies* and *conjectures*. Nay, if we look into Scripture examples, we shall find this irrefragably confuted; the same cause having at several times differing success. Thus the *Israelites* were discomfited at their first assault upon *Ai*, and yet successful after; 'twas something extrinsick to the cause that made the variation, that still continuing the same. The like we find in the case of the *Benjamites*, who though in as ill an engagement as can well be imagin'd, had yet two victories over the other Tribes, *Judg*. 20. But there is one instance that may serve for all, and that is the taking of the Ark by the *Philistines*: He that shall contemplate that, will sure never think fit to measure causes by success, unless he will give the deference also to *Dagon*, who then triumph'd in the spoils of the God of *Israel*. In short, 'tis evident, victories are not so entail'd upon the justest Causes, but that they may be, and often are cut off, either by the guilts of the undertakers, or by some other secret disposal of the divine Wisdom; but the former is so frequently the obvious cause of it, that we are not often put to resort to the latter. 'Tis no strange thing to see all *Israel* troubled by an *Achan*, or have the *Ark* taken captive from off the shoulders of a *Hophni* and *Phineas*, nor will it ever be possible for the best cause, to secure it self from the blasting influence of its abettors crimes.

We must govern our actions by God's laws, and not his providence.

21. This is so clear and evident a truth, that 'tis matter of some wonder how the contrary persuasion should ever insinuate it self; and indeed it is not probable it ever had, if interest, that grand *Sophister*, had not introduced it. Men engage in designs, not on intuition of their *lawfulness*, but *profit*; and when they are such as nothing can warrant *a priore*, their only reserve is to make them good *a posteriore*; to bring a licence after the fact, and justify their beginning by their end; which how ridiculous soever it may seem to sober reason, yet such is the natural shame, or secular inconvenience of owning an *unjust act*, that men will wrap themselves, though in the thinnest

The slightest pretences are made use of to excuse sin, after 'tis once committed.

and most *diaphanous veils*, make use of the absurdest *pretences* and faintest *colours*, to shadow their *Guilt*; and whilst consciousness bids them say somewhat for themselves, and the case affords no solid Plea, they are driven to these deplorable sleights and subterfuges. Indeed this is an argument that stands single, and is seldom used, but in those causes that admit of no better; which we may reasonably conclude to be the reason, why it was so much insisted on by our late disturbers, who in such *abundance of light*, as they own'd, could not be suppos'd *ignorant* enough to believe themselves: 'Twas certainly the destitution of better arguments that cast them upon this, forc'd them to ransack the *Alcoran*, and rifle a piece of *Turkish Divinity* to make good their *Saintship*. They now discern the unskilfulness of that *plea*, which a little time has converted to an *accusation*. The great change it has pleas'd God to make among us, retorting their conquering *Syllogisms*, and making them need a new success to justifie their vaunts of the old. God grant we may not here relieve them again, and by our personal sins help them to that which the justice of their cause never did, nor is like to acquire them.

Another mistake of Providence, to judge of the goodness of any cause by its success;

22. But though this plea of success be frequently urg'd in *policy*, yet it prevails with many, who know not that it is so; indeed the vulgar are so much subjected to their *senses*, that generally the conclusions drawn thence, are easily embrac'd, when those from Reason and Conscience have a double difficulty, first to be understood, and next to be admitted; and the most elaborate Discourse shall not convince them of the right of that *cause*, which in the last appeal to God's Tribunal by war, has been openly condemn'd; whilst the *spoils* of victory as much satisfie the understanding of the *justice* of the prize, as the desire, with the *wealth* or *glory* of it. And this is it, which renders such kind of arguings very pernicious, they being so fitted to the common temper, that they seldom miss to be effectual; and engage the *heady* multitude in the prosecution of the worst *designs*, that are recommended to them by the one *catholick virtue* of Success. This is indeed, as the *Prophet* speaks, *Ez.* 13. 22. *to strengthen the hands of evil doers, that they turn not from their wickedness*; to dazle their eyes so with the splendor of prosperous iniquity, that they can never come to take an exact view, and discern it in its true form. And doubtless this was none of the least prevailing arts of seducement among us, and drew in many to abet those seditious practices, which all Laws of God and Man prohibited, and whereby *Christian Religion* has at once been violated and defam'd; has not only *her precepts* broken, but *her self* asperst with the foul consequences of that disobedience, and so buys one injury with another; the contempt of her *Authority* with the loss of her *Reputation*.

yet God intends our good by all his Providential Dispensations.

23. We have now seen the *ill consequences* issuing from these mistakes of God's *Providence*, but we must take notice that there remains yet as great, or greater danger on the other side; and that a *total neglect* is worse than an *erroneous construction* of it. For though God hath secluded us from that more exact minute discerning of his purposes, yet he means not his *dispensations* should be lookt on as wholly *insignificant*; and therefore has given us the general scope and meaning of them, according to which we are to limit and restrain our *wandring guesses*, and also judge of particular *events*. Now as God's original and primary *design* in the creation of man, was to render him a *subject capable of eternal happiness*; so also have all his *subsequent acts* toward him aim'd at the same end: And because there is nothing removes man so far from that grand purpose of his being, as sin; therefore God has made the suppressing of that, the universal intendment of his disposals concerning us: So that the most different dispensations do severally pursue that one end; *prosperity* and *adversity* in their successive changes, are sent to reclaim us from the *error of our ways*, with this only difference, that the *one* leads, the *other* drives. This is asserted by St. *Paul*, who tells us, that *the goodness and long-suffering of God is to lead us to Repentance*, Rom. 2. 5. And also that when we are judg'd, *we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the World*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 32. And indeed the whole Scripture runs in the same strain, and both from prosperous and adverse successes urges the obligation to obedience. This is the notice God expects we should take of all his dealings towards us; and the want thereof we find often sharply upbraided by God to the *Jews*: How often does he recount his redeeming them from *Egypt*, his enstating them in *Canaan*, and all his wonderful works for them, with an accusing reflection upon their ingratitude? and that we may know his *Judgments* are no less to be accounted for than his *Mercies*, we find him, *Amos* 4. making a *catalogue* of them, and closing every period with this *pathetick Reproof* of their obstinacy, *Yet have ye not returned to me, saith the Lord.* In short, God requires that we should observe every turn of his *hand*, in order to the reforming our own *lives*, and by the several *mediums* of Gratitude or Fear, infer that

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necessary conclusion of a sincere *universal Obedience*; and the neglect of this, is the crime the *Psalmist* mentions, *Psal.* 28. 5. with so severe a menace, *They regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands.*

24. And as this is requir'd from single persons, so also from Societies and Communities, which as they are in their publick capacities the most eminent subjects of Judgments or Mercies, so are they the most eminently accountable for both. And though the neglect and abuse of God's methods be a very provoking *guilt*, when 'tis only *personal*, yet is it much more so, when it becomes *national*: And therefore as it is every man's concern for his own *peculiar*, to examine how he has answered God's methods towards him, so is it an enquiry very pertinent in relation to the *publick* also; especially where the dispensations have been remarkable and extraordinary; in which respect the *inquisition* cannot appear more necessary for any than *this Nation*; upon which consideration, I hope the reader will think it no unpardonable digression, if we a while turn aside after it.

National reformation is designed by national mercies and judgments.

25. It is the *affirmation of our blessed Saviour*, that *where much is given, there shall be much requir'd*; a thing so consonant with natural equity, that we all give our suffrage to it, by making it the measure of our expectations in secular things, wherein every man looks for *returns* proportionable to his *expence* or *industry*. The husbandman expects a *crop* answerable to his *seed* and *labour*: And in the nobler *cultures* of the mind, we justly exact of our pupils, to let their *manners* attest the *discipline* they have been under: According to which estimate we must resolve, that God's expectations from *us* of *this Nation*, cannot but be very high, there being no people under the sun, whom he has more signaliz'd as *his own immediate* care, on whom the *Divine Oeconomy*, has more constantly and even solicitously attended in all the variety of seasonable and powerful *applications*.

God expects our returns should be answerable to what we receive.

26. I shall not assume the work of a *Chronicle*, by giving a series of all those Mercies we receiv'd in the loins of our ancestors, and of which we have provided one unhappy memorial, I mean our nauseating and despising them; it having been the business of our days, to dis-intail those two most inestimable blessings, of a *pure Religion* and *outward Peace*, which our immediate progenitors left us; and to derive to our posterity the contrary mischiefs of impiety and confusion.

This Nation hath been blessed with many mercies, which we have abused and forgot;

27. But not to ravel so far back, I shall confine my reflections to so late a date, that I shall not need to bespeak the faith afforded to *Historians*; scarce any that can be my *Reader*, but is qualified to be my *witness* too; and must acknowledge that there has on God's part been no method wanting, that might purifie us to himself *a peculiar people zealous of good works*. To that end of refining and cleansing us it was, that he kept us so long in the *furnace*, permitted us to those many *fiery trials* of our late calamitous days. 'Twere impertinent here to give a description of *those sufferings*, which every man's memory can so readily represent to him; or to paint that *flame*, whose scorchings we have felt; 'tis enough to say, that *God* appear'd in them, earnestly industrious to have reduced us; like a skilful captain, besieg'd us closely, straitned us so in all our interests, that it was scarce possible for us to fly any where but to himself. Indeed he that would make up an exact catalogue of our Calamities, must calculate in how many instances humane nature may be passive; there being scarce any of our suffering capacities, to which they were not liberally apportioned, our *Estates*, our *Persons*, our *Friends*, and which is more than all, our *Consciences*, all groaning under the weight of that *yoke*, which our own sins prepar'd, and other mens sins put on. Which way soever we look'd, we saw nothing but that which might consume our *eyes*, and grieve our *hearts*: If on the Church, we saw that torn by *schism*, spoil'd by *sacrilege*; the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, and the *house of Prayer* made in the most literal sense *a den of Thieves*. If on the State, we saw the *breath* of our nostrils, the *anointed of the Lord* taken in their *pits*, imprison'd and arraign'd, and barbarously *murder'd*, by those who slew him, like the *Heir* in the Gospel, that they might seize on his *inheritance*. We saw this, and all other mischiefs establish'd *by a law*, and made as irreversible as powerful malice could render them. And now in such a distress, who would not think that such a necessity should have become our virtue? and so perfect a destitution compell'd our resort to the Divine Aid? And as little opprest states us'd to make themselves homagers to the *Romans*, to engage their protection; so we should have made an entire surrendry of our selves to *God*, that we might have gain'd a title to his rescues and deliverances.

and been exercised lately with variety of judgments and calamities.

28. This genuine and kindly effect I doubt not but it had in *some*, I would fain think in *many*; but we are not now considering *particulars*, but the *community*; and therefore how sincere soever such personal Reformations were, they must not come under

which yet have had no effect toward our repentance and humiliation;

under the account of publick and general, unless for their number and eminency they had been sufficient to have overwhelmed the contrary perverseness; Many there might be, whose hearts, as 'tis said of *Josiah's*, (2 *Chron.* 34. 27.) did melt, and yet the far greater number of the obdurate still justly denominate us *a stiff-necked people*; an epithet wherewith God often reproaches the *Jews*, and sure we have no less evidenced our title to it: For alas! as if we had meant to revenge the inexorableness of our oppressors towards us, in our obstinacy to God; as if when we could keep nothing else, we had yet reserved this sullen comfort, of having our hearts impregnable, we made a shift to hold out against all these batteries; there was little *appearance*, and less *reality* of *repentance*; and if some of our *lusts* were at all less raging, 'twas only, because they were starved into a little tameness, the *supplies* cut off, which should maintain our riot; but when any recruits could be had, they were devoted that way, and even in the worst of times we mist not to be as luxurious as we were able; and as though we resolv'd that *vice*, like the *Sea*, should gain in one part, what it lost in another; we took order that what was thus inevitably defaulk'd from those *expensive* sins, should be made up in the *cheaper*. We could curse, and swear, and blaspheme in spight of *Sequestration*; and this wretched immunity we made abundant use of, till we even became *proverbial* for it, and gave our enemies pretence to fasten it on us, as our distinctive character: Yet to shew our selves generous sinners, there was *one vice* we bought at a dear rate, I mean our as imprudent, as unchristian animosities, and *piques* among our selves; a sin that helpt to revenge all the rest, and was as well upon a humane, as divine account, a grand instrument of our *ruine*. To these we may add our impatient murmurs at our sufferings, which did in some work so preposterously, as to reconcile them to the inflicters, made them unworthily desert that cause they found chargeable to maintain, and contrary to the advice of *Solomon*, chuse the ways of those oppressors whose prosperity they envied, *Prov.* 3. But of these *real Apostates*, the number I hope was not great: I wish I could say so also of those *seeming deserters*, whose knees bowed to *Baal*, though their hearts did not; who belyed their own *loyalty*, and in a shew of compliance prostituted *conscience* in several engagements as inconsistent with each other, as they all were with duty; and such as they pretend no excuse for their *taking*, but their resolutions of *breaking*. It was indeed a sad spectacle to see, what sholes every menacing edict brought in; while men ran in as much haste to take the opportunity of *Perjury*, as the primitive Christians were wont to do of *Martyrdom*: Indeed herein we seem'd to invade our enemies peculiar, would not suffer them to enjoy those marks of distinction they had framed to themselves; so that as far as *Oaths* could signifie, we were all *one party*. And yet while we thus disclaim'd God's reliefs by these indirect attempts of our own, we took it very ill that he left us to the success of them: That he prosper'd not those methods he had interdicted, and made us triumphant, not only over our enemies, but himself too: And upon this score many mutinous *blasphemies* were utter'd, and perhaps some more thought, though I confess generally we were not so modest, as to stick at saying the worst we could think; and indeed they that heard the frequent doubts men own'd of God's justice, providence, nay his very being, wou'd not think they supprest any thing as too ill to be spoken: We laid boundless expectations upon the justice of our *cause*, and as if we had extremely oblig'd God by not being *traitors* or *schismaticks*, thought he wrong'd us extremely that he made us not *victors*. *Samuel* tells *Saul*, that *rebellion is like witchcraft*: But we seem'd to think *loyalty* was so; that like a spell, it was to keep us invulnerable, not only against our enemies, but our selves; and so countercharm all our crimes, that they should only be active to please, not hurt us. But if in the last place, we reflect on our selves, even in relation to that *cause*, in which we so much confided, 'tis to be fear'd all men will not be able to evince, they suffer'd for *God* and the *King*, though they did it in their *quarrel*: 'Tis the intent must denominate whose martyrs they were, it being too frequent for private passions and interests to march under the banner of conscience; and we call that sometimes taking up the *cross*, which is only the taking up an *animosity* or *humour*. Indeed 'tis not possible for any to be God's *martyr*, who is not first his *servant*; none of us will suffer the greatest things for a person, for whom we will not do the least; and 'tis absurd hypocrisie for a man to pretend he has left *all* for God, who we see cannot be wooed to leave the most despicable *lust* for him. He that will not part with the noise of a loud *oath*, the pleasure of an intemperate cup, the applause of a profane *jest* for God, will surely much less expose his *liberty*, his *estate*, his *life* for him; and therefore what hazards soever any man ran in any of those, he can with no justice set it upon God's account, unless he can produce such other acts of obedience, as may

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witness this to be true and genuine. And upon this trial, I fear *God's party* will appear to have been but small among us, and perhaps the *king*'s not much greater, it being not very probable, that those should have any great sense of duty to him, that had none to *God;* or that those should religiously revere one Commandment, who despised the other *nine.* But we need not the help of inference and probability in this matter, the mutinous and insolent behaviour of many who profest loyalty, did too clearly evince it: And as it is said of *Joab*, that he turn'd after *Adonijah*, though he turn'd not after *Absalom*, 1 Kings 2. 28. so some of ours had little private rebellions of their own, even while they oppos'd the more publick. I love not to pass censures on mens thoughts, yet I doubt some would be too conscious to confute me, if I should say there wanted not those, who owed their *zeal* to their *spleen*, and did not so much love those they fought for, as hated those they fought *against.* And it may perhaps deserve enquiry, whether that demure *pretence of holiness* their adversaries had put on, did not more avert some of our *libertines* from them, than all their *real crimes:* They perhaps so far mistook them, as to suspect they might be in earnest, when they profest to advance the *power of godliness*, and at that took an *alarm*, and such men (if such there were) contended not for the liberty of their *country*, but their *lusts;* and could with no justice expect either a reputation, or success from that cause, which they at once helpt to defame and defeat. I am loth to go farther, and suspect that even some of the devouter sort were inspir'd more by the spirit of *opposition* than *piety;* yet I confess 'tis hard to resist that surmise, when 'tis consider'd that our *Liturgy* never had its due veneration, but when the *Directory* was set up against it. Indeed he that shall remember how our *private oratories* were then throng'd and crouded, and shall now compare it with our *empty Churches*, will be tempted to think our *devotion* was of that sort, which is excited by *interdict*, and deadned by invitations; a perverse kind of zeal, kindled only by *Antiperistasis*, or collision; none of that pure flame which descends from heaven. And then as our *Saviour* in another case says, *If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?* Matth. 6. If this fairer and more specious part of us were thus reproveable, how obnoxious were the other? And if our earnestness in a righteous cause, by its sinister motives or adherencies be unable to justifie it self, how shall it bear that heavier task we laid on it, and plead for our other guilts?

but we have increased our sins with our suffering.

29. This is the true, though not full account of our behaviour under *God's discipline*, thus did we fructifie upon his pruning us; brought forth indeed nothing but degenerous *fruit.* The *holy Writ* leaves it as a brand of most inveterate impiety upon *Ahaz*, that *in the time of his distress he sinn'd yet more against the Lord*, 2 Chr. 28. 22. and sure we have too just title to the same character of infamy; those sufferings which were sent to chastize our sins, serv'd but to encrease them, and like the *Israelites* in the *brick-kilns*, they multiplied the more for their oppression; we debauch'd even our *executioners*, and made every new *calamity* supply us with some new *vice.* And now when God's *rod* was thus despis'd, we were in all reason to expect he should draw his *sword*, revenge our resistance of his methods, by somewhat we could not resist, make our *plagues* as obstinate as our *selves*, and involve us in hopeless inevitable ruin. *This certain fearful* looking for of *judgment*, Heb. 10. 27. was all we had left our selves, of all the rich patrimony we were once possest of; and our present misery seem'd impossible to expire any way, but by dying into greater.

Yet God's mercy hath wonderfully appear'd in our deliverance.

30. But as great artificers are us'd to magnifie their art, by choosing the most unlikely materials; so did it please God in this total indisposedness of ours, when we were so unapt subjects to illustrate his mercy, and as if he design'd this *national deliverance* should (in its proportion) be the transcript of our more *universal redemption*, he visited us not only in this state of misery, but enmity; when we had set our selves in defiance of his *judgments*, he laid as it were an ambush of *mercy* for us, and surpriz'd us with safety: By such undiscernible *ways return'd the captivity of our Sion*, that we were indeed deliver'd *like them that dream*, Psal. 126. 1. gave us a *victory* without a *war;* without the intervention of *garments rolled in blood*, Isa. 9. 5. invested us in our triumphant robes, and in a word, made us insensibly to glide into our long forgotten prosperity.

which ought to have obliged us to a suitable change and amendment.

31. And now who can imagine, but this miraculous mutation *without* us, must also work a change *within* us? Indeed they must have a very ill opinion of humane nature, that can think it possible it should have perverseness enough to resist such endearments; such kindly heat must needs be suppos'd to melt us; and if before our pride disdain'd to be *compell'd*, yet even that stubbornest part of us cannot object against the being *courted into amendment.* So that when God has thus yielded to our terms,

left us not so much as a *punctilio* in our way to piety, 'tis but a reasonable expectation, we should embrace it with as great an earnestness, as it was formerly *rejected* by us.

But we have ingratefully defeated the designs thereof, 32. And would God we could say we did so; but alas! we still affect prodigies, take a kind of wanton joy in defeating God's designs, and as if we aspir'd to vye miracles with him, have made our *returns* as unparallell'd as his *mercies*; so that the summ of our account is this: No nation was ever more signaliz'd by *God's goodness*, or its *own perverseness*, it being hard to determine in which of those respects it is most *eminent*. That this is in the general perfectly true, there are too many particulars ready to testifie, indeed a whole cloud of witnesses do concur to the proving the charge. I shall not undertake to examine *all*, yet *some* of the principal it will not be amiss to take notice of.

and almost lost the sense of our late miraculous Deliverance, 33. Before we enquire into the *use* we have made of God's mercies, let us a little consider what our *sense* of them is; and sure of all the *interrogatories* we can put to our selves, this appears the easiest, the most gentle favourable test, that even our own partialities could elect for us; it being so natural to men in misery to value a rescue, and celebrate their deliverers, that the contrary would be the only wonder; we see even the *Jews*, who were none of the most malleable people, yet *deliverances* made impressions on them, set them to their *devout processions* and *solemn hymns* in praise of God: Nay, such a piece of native religion is this, that the *Heathens* exemplifie it to us. The *Philistines*, when they had taken *Samson*, magnified their *Dagon*, as having *delivered their enemy and the destroyer of their country into their hands*, Judg. 16. 24. So upon the victory over *Saul*, 1 Sam. 31. 9. *they sent round about to publish it in the house of their idols*. And in all stories we find, the *Heathen altars* were never so loaden with *sacrifices*, as upon such occasions: And the Gospel tells us, that those on whom Christ bestowed miraculous cures, were so transported with them, that their gratitude supplanted their obedience, and made them notwithstanding his prohibition, proclaim the wonders he had done for them: But I fear if we reflect upon our selves, we shall not be able to match any of these instances. 'Tis true, our late *change* was entertain'd with a joy *profuse* enough, but not enough *religious*. We saw that great things were done for us, and thereof we rejoyced; but we did not so much consider that the *Lord* had done them, *Psal.* 124. and so were rather affected with the *rarity* and *profitableness*, than the *mercy* and *kindness* of the dispensation. And tho' the care of our *governours* have provided for the religious part also, assign'd *days of Purim* for the perpetual commemoration of our *deliverance*, yet our slight observance of them does too fully evince our joy was merely secular; and surely he that observ'd the numerous and loud *acclamations* in the *streets*, and the few faint *Hallelujahs* in the *Temple*, must needs say they were very disproportionate, and that how much soever the most of us rejoyc'd, it was not in the *Lord*: And then we are not to wonder that it was so transient; since it was merely *earthly*, it must needs partake of the fadingness of its *original*: Whereas had we deriv'd it higher, it would have been *lasting* and *durable*, it could not so suddenly have expir'd, had we fetcht it from him, *in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore*. But alas! our transports were such as exhausted themselves in their own noise; we exprest our joy in *bonefires*, and it vapour'd away in the *smoke*; there wanted that mixture of piety which should have fixed that *volatile passion*, and we who at first were much more glad than thankful, within a very short time ceased to be either.

and grown mightily dissatisfied with our present circumstances. 34. And then as *violent heats*, when once expir'd, are succeeded by the *extremest cold*, so has it fared with us; we fell from our *extasies*, not to the mean, but the contrary extreme; our vast complacencies at their parting, carried with them even ordinary contentation, and left us not only joyless, but impatient. It was indeed matter of equal shame and wonder, to see a scene so suddenly chang'd, wherein, as in many other instances, we seem'd to have transcrib'd the copy of the mutinous *Israelites*, whom we find in the very same chapter, *Exod.* 15. triumphing, and repining; and no sooner were the timbrels out of their *hands*, but complaints were in their *mouths*, ver. 24. *What shall we drink?* And in the beginning of the next, with the same querulous importunity they require meat. But not to wrong them in the comparison, their murmurs had some extenuating circumstances, which ours have not; they lookt indeed with some appetite upon *Egypt*, and made some proposals of return, but it was while they suffer'd the hardships of the wilderness; they preferr'd a repleted *slavery*, before a hungry *freedom*; but even they were not so frantick in their mutinies, as to make any such offer in *Canaan*, or have any emulation to the *garlick* and *onions*, amidst the affluence of *milk* and *honey*: No, 'tis we alone that have the unhappy skill of reconciling the sins of *Canaan*, and the *wilderness*; murmur as much

under our *vines* and *fig-trees*, as at *Rephidim*, or *Marah*, and make all the out-cries of *want* and *slavery*, whilst we wallow in the utmost luxury of *plenty* and *freedom.* I need not here specifie the particulars of our murmurings, this discourse being not likely to find many whose innocence will need that information; this *malignant humour* having spread so, that 'tis now become almost a scandalous (because a singular) thing to be contented. And certainly a considering foreigner, that should come among us, could not but be astonish'd to see a nation so full of all those things which use to create temporal satisfactions, and yet to find no body in it satisfied; to see so many parties among us, and none prosperous. This is such a riddle, as would tempt a man to suspect his *senses*, and think we had all this while but dreamt of a *restoration*; been under the delusion the *Prophet* describes of the *hungry and thirsty man, that at his waking finds he is empty, and his soul hath appetite*, Isa. 29. 8. 'Tis a sad, but visible truth, that all that God has done for us, hath been so far from filling our desires, that it has only serv'd to enlarge them: For I appeal to any of our loudest mutineers, whether if some years since the present state of affairs had been represented to them, drest in the worst circumstances they now complain of, they would not then have thought it extremely amiable, worth *Rachel's* prize of seven years more hardship; nay, whether they would not willingly have made some abatements, relinquish'd part of what they now enjoy, to have had the rest secur'd? And when God has granted us all we then asked, shall we murmur because we could *now* perhaps ask something more; and like ingrate debtors, pick a quarrel to evade payment? was it not enough that he engag'd his *Omnipotence* for us, but must his *Omniscience* also be prest upon the same service? and provide all he could foresee we could wish? Alas! do we think we have the same hank upon God, that some gallants have on their trusting merchants, that upon peril of losing all former scores, he must still go on to supply us? Shall we think nothing fit for oblivion but our obligations? And in this perverse sense transcribe St. *Paul*, Phil. 3. 13. *forgetting those things which are behind, reach forward to the things which are before?* This indeed too fully speaks us the off-spring of our first parents; we can find no gust in all the fruits of *Paradise*, if any one be denied us; and still look not on what we have, but what we want; and as it is observ'd of the greedier sort of creatures, that they relish not one bit for the vehement expectation of another: So is it with us, we *devour*, but do not *enjoy* our blessings; and to require him to satisfie us, is to assign him the *Poets* hell, set him with *Belus's* daughters, to the task of filling a *sieve* with water, or rolling *Sysiphus's* stone; our growing appetites still keeping us empty and restless, amidst all endeavours to make us otherwise; so that whereas God uses to commit his *favours* to men, as *seed* to the earth, in expectation of an *harvest*, some fruits of gratitude and obedience, they seem with us rather to be flung into a *gulph*, whose property is only to *swallow*, never to *fructifie*.

Our grievances nothing so great now as formerly.

35. I know mens minds are so possest with their discontents, our daily mutinous blasts have puffed up and swelled our grievances to such vastness, that he must expect to be very impatiently heard, that shall attempt to represent them in a lesser size; yet sure 'twere not impossible even upon a direct view, to demonstrate them very *light* and *moderate*: But upon a comparative, perfectly *trivial* and inconsiderable; and 'tis a little strange, that we who bare our *late, suffering estate* with so much impatience, should not have impressions enough left in our memory, to confront to all our *present regrets*. Do we not quietly now possess the fruits of our own, or our progenitors *industry*, without danger of any sequestration, but what our own luxuries inflict? Are not our persons at freedom; deliver'd from that kind word, and unkind thing, SECURING? So that when we rise in the morning, we need not fear our next lodging shall be in the *goal* or dungeon; nor when we sit down to our meal, suspect the intrusion of *arm'd uninvited guests*, who e'er whiles, we know, were wont to surprize us, as the plague did the *Israelites, even while the meat was yet in our mouths*. Are not our lives under the custody of known *laws*, so that no man is in danger, that will but keep himself within those *boundaries*; nor need fear to be mockt into his grave by shews and pageantries of justice; and besides these real *escapes* from *slavery*, are we not rescued from the most imbittering circumstance of it, the having *servants rule over us?* A thing which rendred our subjection as mean and servile, as it was sharp and pressing, and which we were then so sensible of, that it never mist to bring up the rear of our complaints. Lastly, if we reflect upon our higher spiritual concerns, are we not freed from those boisterous robust *temptations*, which with the violence of famine and sword, beggary and death assaulted our *constancy*, and left no mean between martyrdom and apostasy? Are we not also restor'd to all those spiritual advantages, which we once profest so much to value? That *well of life* now lies open before us,

after which we once panted, like the *hart* after the *water springs*; our ancient *worship* is reviv'd, and wants only our attendance to make it solemn, whereas the *abomination of desolation* stood in the holy place, our prayers were turned to sin; needed, but were denied the *Liturgy* to pray against them, or atone their guilts. We have no longer *stones* given us for *bread*, nor experiment that sad riddle, of being at once cloyed and starved; amidst excess of preaching, suffering a famine of the Word. And now are all these worth no regard? If they are not, why did we exclaim so loudly when we wanted them? If they are, why are we still as querulous now we have them? 'Tis sure these include all our great and substantial interests as men, and Christians, and those being provided for, 'tis not easily imaginable what others we should have important enough to make us querulous, unless it be those of passion and humour. One man's *ambition* perhaps wants a satisfaction, another man's *avarice*, a third's *spleen*; and this *discord* makes up the very unmusical harmony of our *murmurs*. If we see but a *Mordecai* in the king's gate, whom we wish removed, we can like *Haman*, find no gust in any thing we enjoy. If we see some, who we think have borne less of the burden and heat of the day, rewarded equally, or perhaps above our selves, we are sure to make out the parable, by murmuring at the good Man of the house: Or if *Nineveh* be spar'd, if all be not executed, to whom we have denounc'd destruction, we, like *Jonah*, sit down in a sullen discontent, and grow weary of our lives, because others are permitted to enjoy theirs. To these and other heads of the like nature, 'tis apparent our *grievances* may be reduced; and then if the balance be put into any dispassionate hand, 'tis sure they can never become a counterpoize to the other real benefits we enjoy, but will in the *Prophet's* phrase appear *lighter than vanity and nothing*.

Our fears and jealousies afflict us more than our actual sufferings.

36. But I suppose some will say, 'tis not only *present* uneasinesses of which they are impatient, but the possibility of *future*, a fear of relapsing into our former estate by the ill managery of our present. To these I shall answer, That admit it were so, yet sure 'twill be no wisdom to anticipate our miseries, to forestal discontents, and make foresight as painful as actual suffering. In other forbidden instances we choose to enjoy the present, and with an *Epicurean* indifferency cry, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*, 1 Cor. 15. 32. How is it that we here become so unluckily sagacious, unless it be that murmuring is a sensuality we account equivalent, nay, superior to all rational satisfactions? and therefore, that we may have no intermission of that delight, suborn our fancies to find occasions, and fetch in from the future those supplies which the present affords not. But besides this, I should in the second place ask these great *diviners*, why they do not also foresee, that this very *mutinous temper* of theirs is the most direct and infallible means of bringing those *mischiefs* they pretend to fear? That it is so, is most evident, and so well observ'd by our *adversaries*, that there is little doubt, they have not only pleasure, but designs upon it; and to that purpose have their *engines* on work, to blow up the *hot spirits* among us, in expectation from thence to raise a *flame*. So blind a thing is *passion*, that it hurries on to the things which in their issue we most abhor; makes us our enemies *drudges*, and the *forgers* of our own shackles; and whilst we cry out of petty indulgencies, we our selves give them in the *lump*, what we grudge them in *parcels*: This is a miserable infatuation, and while we act thus unreasonably, we are sure no competent declaimers against ill managery. But besides this natural effect of our murmurs, we are also to remember that there is a divine vengeance attending it. When *bounties* and *largesses* are quarrell'd at, we necessitate God to another method, nay indeed, not only his *vengeance*, but even his *kindness* seems to suggest it; when he sees our constitutions such, that his gentle applications work contrary effects, 'tis very apposite for him to try whether the *Antiperistasis* will operate on the other side; if we smart thus under *lenitives*, 'tis but fit to essay, if *corrosives* will ease us; and the only remaining experiment for the making us *happy* is to make us *miserable*.

Impossible to have our desires completely satisfied in this world.

37. But would God, we might yet prevent the need of such unkindly *expedients*, and by a sober estimate, and thankful sense of what we have, provide to conserve it! not fastidiously despise great and eminent *blessings*, because, perhaps they come not home to every part of our *wishes*. Alas! those plenary satisfactions agree not with the nature of earthly things; 'Tis an observation long since rais'd from the globular and triangular form of the world and our hearts, that 'tis impossible the one should be filled with the other, there will still be some angles, some vacuities left; our very *accessions* create new *wants*; and like an unsound limb, the healing of one sore is the breaking out of another. Every thing under the *moon* partakes of her *vicissitudes*, augments and decreases only with this difference, that though their *wanes* be to as

low a degree as hers, they never are perfectly *at the full*. There never was, nor ever will be a state here compleatly happy: And as the *Philosopher* handsomely reproach'd the impatience of the *Persian* King for the death of his wife, by undertaking to revive her, if he could help him but to the names of *three* men, that had never griev'd, to write upon her *Tomb*; so surely we may make the like offer to our *malecontents*, and engage to redeem all their uneasinesses, if they can point us out (I say not three, but) *one age*, wherein there were no *complaints*. What then are our clamorous repinings, but so many loud *invectives* against God's *decree*; a desire to subvert his fundamental *Law*, and confound the *distinction* he has irreversibly set between our *earthly* and our *heavenly* state? And alas! what mad insolence is this, to expect that the whole *Oeconomy* of the World must be chang'd only to humour us? that God must replant us a *Paradise*, pluck up every one of the briars and thorns, which were our native curse? nay, bring down *Heaven* to us, and enstate us in undisturb'd, unmixt felicities? This is indeed simply considered a very wild expectation, but yet more so, when 'tis consider'd how we qualifie our selves for such a privilege: For let me ask, are we as eager to anticipate the *holiness* as the *happiness* of Heaven? Do we as passionately desire to do *God's* will, as that *God* should do ours? and emulate the *angelical obedience* and *purity*, as much as *bliss*? These are interrogatories, which need no verbal answer, our lives do too fully resolve them in the negative; and then how shameless a partiality is it, thus to carve to our selves, and choose out of either state what we best like, reserve all the *sensualities* of this World, and yet cry out for the *impassibleness* of the next? But alas! these are pretensions as inconsistent as they are bold, *vices* having such a native inseparable adherency of *pain* and *vexation*, that 'tis not the most dexterous managery of a sin that can ever sever them; but if we will retain the *one*, we must the *other* also: A truth, which might be exemplified to us, throughout the whole *catalogue*, even of sensual sins; but it is most eminently visible in this of *murmuring*, which stays not as others do to take pain at the *rebound*, and by way of result, but has it as its first *element* and *principle*; it being it self almost as great a pain, as any it can betray us to: And yet to secure an advance and *perpetuity* of torment, every event serves to foment and heighten it, and the most desperate things are equally combustible to that *flame*. Indeed he that is possest with that humour, has a kind of fury within him, that will never let him rest: And alas! what *Legions* of such evil spirits are now among us? How are we as it were inspir'd with *Mutiny*! it being the *universal dialect* of the Nation; and of many in it, who cannot be suppos'd to found it in any observation of their own, but are led by the *common genius*, and bellow rather by consent with the rest of the herd, than for any uneasiness, at least of *injustice* and *oppression* (for such only give pretence for *Mutiny*) that themselves feel. And since 'tis become a *Plebeian vice*, would God our *Gentry* would use it as they do their *fashions*, and leave it off (if for no better reason) for its being *vulgar*: And indeed it were but equitable, that those who have taken up so many sins upon *punctilio*, should for once lay down one upon the same score. The *Athenian* state put down their *Ostracism* (which otherwise they were fond enough of) because it was debased, by happening to fall on *Hyperbolus*, a despicable and abject person: And there seems not much difference in the cases, save only that we are more tenacious of *sins*, than they of *punishments*; and I fear we shall so long retain this, till we find it its own *Lictor*, not only in the *present uneasiness*, but in that more *fruitful harvest* of Mischiefs, whereof it has now sown the seeds. We see here what our thankfulness is, for those eminent miraculous mercies we have receiv'd, and the account of that is an unhappy *specimen*, what we are like to find, when we survey the uses we have made of them, which God knows have been so unnatural and perverse, as does too fully parallel the former instance.

The worship of God, though but lately restor'd, is yet already neglected by us.

38. For first, if we reflect upon our *spiritual blessings*, what has the enjoyment of those advantages produced, but the contempt of them? We have an easie free access to God in his Sanctuary, our *Churches* are no longer *Garrisons* to keep out the worship to which they were devoted, but like *hospitable doors*, are open to the regular piety of any that will enter. And now we have this liberty, now the *flaming sword* is removed, we have lost all appetite to the *Tree of Life*, can willingly let those *everlasting Gates* (as the *Psalmist* stiles them) *Psal.* 21. *stand* as everlastingly *open*, ere we enter them: And though the Fabricks are by God's providence rescued from their dust and ruines, yet many of us endeavour to reduce them to a yet worse desolation, strive to depopulate those sacred mansions, and execute against them that *prophetick threat* concerning *Nineveh*, *Nahum* 1. *Leave them empty, void and waste*. And indeed so they are, if not in an absolute, yet in a comparative sense; for could we at any

any time of *Divine Service*, make an estimate of *all* the persons that are absent, 'twould scarce be discern'd that *any* are there; were all corners ransackt, what a multitude of *Recusants* should we find upon a far differing account from that of Conscience? Some we should see stretching themselves upon their beds, keeping a Sabbath indeed, but to their *sloth*, not their *God*; others, perhaps we may find rous'd from their couches, upon the summons, not of *Religion*, but *Vanity*; some new garment is to be fitted, some exotick dress essayed, and they who grudge *one hour* to the Preacher's glass, can spend *many* at their own; where they are so taken up with their *Idolatries* to themselves, that they think of no other worship: Nay, as the world goes, 'twere well this were the worst diversion, that some did not keep from Church, that they might in the interim defile those lesser Temples of God they carry about them, and cut themselves off from the Communion of *Christ's body*, to make themselves *members of an Harlot*; or that others were not *Bacchus* his votaries, when they should be *God's*, spend that time in their frantick revels, and sing a *Dithyrambick* instead of *Te Deum*. As for the *Mammonist*, if he keep any holy day, 'tis like the *Israelites* to his *Gods of gold*, *Exod.* 32. 31. He is looking with veneration on his idoliz'd treasure, numbering those bags he dares not use, or perhaps with a more active zeal, pursuing the means of encreasing them. Thus alas! may we go from one to another, and as it was in *Ezekiel's* vision, see still greater abominations, *Ezek.* 8. And certainly that all-seeing eye, which discerns what multitudes do thus busie themselves, at the times even of his solemnest worship, cannot but adjudge us most profane despisers of his mercy in restoring it: Yet would to God, 'twere only the *absent* upon whom that sentence would fall! but alas, the behaviour of many in the Church, does too loudly testifie how little of devotion brings them thither, and at how mean a rate they value all that is done there: Those *Eyes*, which there should wait on God, as those *of a Servant on the hands of a Master*, *Psal.* 123. 2. are rolling about to fetch in all the Vanities and Temptations which can occur to them, and look *every way*, but *towards Heaven*. Our *Tongues* which should be touch'd with a coal from the Altar, devoted wholly to Hymns and Prayers, are busied in *private Colloquies* with those about us: Business, news, nay all the impertinent chat of our most vacant hours, is then taken up to entertain us; so that he, who would know the *talk of the Town* or Neighbourhood, need go neither to Exchange nor Market, the *Church* will as certainly supply him: And this ill employment of our *Tongues* engages the like of our *Ears*, which when they should be hearkening what the Lord God will say concerning us, are listening to those *vain discourses* we hold with one another; from all, which outward indecencies we may too surely collect the inward irreverence of our heart. And is it possible that this should now be the temper of *those*, who not long since seem'd to bewail their *exclusion* from those sacred assemblies? Did we long for *them* as *David* for the *waters of Bethlehem*, when they appear'd unattainable, and when they are brought to us, refuse to taste them, pour them out, not as he did in *devotion*, but in *contempt*? 'Tis true indeed, in *temporal* delights, *possession* usually proves a nauseating thing, and takes off our *appetite*; but it uses not to be so in *spiritual*, whose peculiar property it is, not to satiate, but excite by fruition: But alas! though the things we converse with are *spiritual*, our Hearts are *carnal*, and that is the cause, why, instead of crying out with the *Psalmist*, *When shall I come to appear in the presence of God? Psal.* 42. we, like those in *Malachy*, Chap. 1. 13. *Snuff at his service, and say, What a weariness is it?* A weariness indeed, it appears in the literal sense with many, who sleep at it, as men over-labour'd, and scarce take so sound repose in their own houses as in God's; indeed such is the variety of rude behaviour that is there us'd, that should an *unbeliever* come into our assemblies, he must surely (as St. *Paul* supposes in another case, 1 *Cor.* 14. 23.) say, *we are mad*; to see some gazing, some whispering, some laughing, others sleeping, and perhaps the far fewer number praying, is such a *medly*, as the most brutish *Idolaters* never admitted in their *worships*; and the way of worshipping *Mercury*, by throwing stones, or *Hercules* by cursing, is a sober and decent kind of service compar'd with this. And now alas! when will the *Church* recover its ancient title, and become the *House of Prayer*? 'Tis sure according to the present appearance it may have many more proper names, that being the least part of the business done in it: 'Tis true, there are some that make it a *Sanctuary*, but 'tis only against the penalties of the *law*, or reproach of arrant *atheism*; they come to save their money, or their credit; others perhaps shun the solitariness of being at home, and come not as to a place of *devotion*, but *concourse*; and 'tis to be doubted, some visit that place as they do many others, because they have nothing else to do: They want their week-days diversion, and so are driven thither upon mere destitution

of more grateful entertainments; make it a kind of *Sunday Playhouse*, sit there as Spectators or Judges, to see the *Company*, or censure the *Preacher*, but never remember that themselves have any other part to act, or are beheld by *Him*, who will not always be patient of such profanation; but will, as the *Scripture* speaks, *Repay them to their face, who thus contemn him to his*. We know among men, every one counts his house his fortress; and an affront offered him *there* doubles the injury, and is not only a *contempt*, but an *invasion*: And shall it not be a proportionable enhansment with *God* also, thus to defie him *within his own doors*, and approach his presence in an impious bravery, the more fully to shew him, how little we regard him? At this rate while we address our selves, we may as ill manner'd guests be *forbid his house*; interrogated by God as the *Jews* were, *Isa.* 1. *Why dost thou tread my Courts?* A total abandoning of Worship being more fair and ingenuous, than such Devotion; wherein like the *barbarous soldiers* we bring Christ a *Sceptre*, only to *smite* him on the head with it; and make a preface of *homage*, to give our selves the sport of the *mockery*: Nay, 'tis sadly to be fear'd, that God may *thrust* us out of his house, *shut* his doors against us, *rescue* his service and himself from our profanation, and put us again under the same, or a worse interdict, than that which lately lay upon us.

39. Having now seen our scandalous irreverence towards God's Worship in *general*, 'tis too easie to make application to the *several parts* of it, every one of which must necessarily partake of the contempt which falls upon the whole; for while we bring no thoughts but *secular* with us, those are equally disagreeing to all the *divine* offices: 'Twill be needless therefore to trace our wandrings in each of those, since our whole *behaviour* in the Church, is one great *deviation* from the business we should come about; yet that supersedes not to every guilty person himself the necessity of a more distinct and particular reflection. 'Tis sure at the *last dreadful Audit* we must account for every of those spiritual advantages we have abus'd; and alas! what a *dismal reckoning* will many of us have then to give up, when our *Prayers*, which we now turn into sin, shall be turn'd into *perdition?* And we, *who* would not supplicate our *God*, shall in vain invoke the *mountains and hills to hide us from the face of the Lamb*; when that word, which we now so fastidiously despise, that it must be drest up in the colours of humane rhetorick, to make us at all patient of it, and becomes then only tolerable to us, when it is farthest removed from being God's: When *that word*, as our *Saviour* speaks, *shall judge us*, and that gracious *invitation to life* end in that fatal sentence, *Go ye cursed*. Nay, when our very propitiation shall *plead* against us, and the crucified body of our Saviour, which we have *in Effigie* so often re-crucified in our unworthy approaches, or impious neglect of the holy *Eucharist* shall *witness* against us as its *murderers*; when we shall be found, not *sprinkled*, as with the blood of a *sacrifice* but *imbrued* as with that of *slaughter*: When all these means of our salvation shall thus miserably convert, and from the *savour of life*, become that *unto death*, 2 *Cor.* 2. 16. Then we shall to our amazement find how differing our estimates of them were from God's; and in his vengeance read the value he put upon them. What then have we now to do, but to anticipate our *dooms day*, and *judge our selves that we may not be judged of the Lord?* to make an impartial account of all these our profanations, and accuse our selves before his *mercy-seat*, that so we may prevent the arraignment at his *bar of judgment?* And as offenders are usually enjoyn'd to acknowledge their guilt in the very places where they committed them, so let us make the *Church* the scene of our *penitence*, as we have of our *faults*; by our strong crying and tears, deprecate our former indevotion, and by an exemplary reverence, redress the scandal of our profaneness. This, and only this is the way to secure us against the *final* vengeance of these sins; nay, and against the *intermedial* also: For we are not to expect that so unkind abuse of mercy shall be wholly respited to another world, it being so exasperating a *crime*, as must in all probability awake God's *fury*, and pull down present judgments. I wish the event do not too soon attest the reasonableness of this supposal.

The great sin and danger of contemning God's holy worship.

40. If from our *spiritual* blessings we now descend to our *temporal*, we shall not appear much better managers of those; they being generally employed to purposes the most distant from those, for which they were given. And first for our *Peace*, that great comprehensive enjoyment, upon which all others are dependent, and which is to our civil capacities the same that *health* is to our *natural*; the thing by which we relish and taste the rest of our comforts, we may from the song of *Zachary*, *Luke* 1. learn for what intent God bestows it: *Deliver ance from enemies* is to no other end, but that we may *serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life*. But alas! he that observes how we employ our quiet, must surely say it serves little to the advancement either of holiness or righteousness: For the first of these we have already

Our peace is abused to publick Profaneness and Impiety,

ready seen, how little of *holiness* we shew even in that place where nothing else should be admitted; and we are not so preposterously religious, to shew more in others. That *piety*, which is so cold and benumb'd under the warm breath of the *publick ordinances*, we may well presume stark frozen in our more retir'd offices: And if it thus faint and sink in consort, 'tis sure more liable to the wise man's *væ soli*, and utterly dies when we are alone. 'Tis true indeed, these *closet transactions* are immediately visible to none, but the *Searcher of hearts*, yet in true devotion, there is such a *symetry* and proportion, that the inferences we make by *analogie*, may be very irrefragable: Nay, 'tis to be fear'd, many lie open to a yet clearer *conviction*, and may be proved to have few, or none of those private intercourses with Heaven; for though a negative be not simply evincible, yet as in civil cases we prove a man not to have been at this time in such a place, by his having actually been in another; so were the whole week, month, perhaps a year, of some men exactly traced, we should find them so engrossed with other *diversions*, that there will scarce be found any minute for *devotion* to interpose: Mens worldly or fleshly concerns so divide their *time*, that God from whom 'tis all derived, can be afforded no tribute out of it. Yet alas! 'twere well if this privative sort of impiety were all we had to answer for; but 'tis too apparent, we do not only *neglect* God, but *reproach* and violate him: What else are those bold and insolent *blasphemies* wherewith we daily assault him, making him the mark at which all our wild passions are shot? Do we want any thing, either for our *use* or *delight?* Presently *God* is accused, his *providence* or his *goodness* questioned; and he declaim'd against, either as impotent or illiberal. Does any body vex or disquiet us? God must have his share of our displeasure, his sacred name must be profaned, and we count our fiercest *revilings* of men faint and insignificant, if not inspired with the most *dreadful* and *horrid oaths*; nay, he stands obnoxious to all the displicencies we receive, even from inanimate creatures; if a *die* or a *card* run amiss, our resentments are presently vented upon him; he is profaned and vilified, as if he were the *cheat* that rookt us of our *money*, because he does not secure us from those losses, to which we wantonly expose our selves. Nor is it only our eager and warmer *passions* that thus invade him; our pleasanter *moods* do the very same, and we blaspheme by way of divertisement; every impertinent story or insipid *jest* must have the hautgoust of an oath to *recommend* it, as every incredible narration has to *attest* it: To say nothing of those more solemn and deliberate *perjuries*, wherein we impiously suborn God's venerable and dreadful *name*, to be the engine of our fraud and malice; and as if we thought he would forswear as well as we, bring him to *countenance* those crimes he has vowed to *punish*. Thus do we with a prodigious impiety contaminate even divinity it self, make it the sink for all our puddles to run into; and prostitute that *name*, which as the *Psalmist* speaks, is *great, wonderful, and holy*, to all the unholy *purposes* our passions, our interests, or our fancies can suggest to us.

which commonly ends in downright Atheism;

41. This *profaneness* is so proper a foundation for *Atheism*, that we are not to wonder to see so many advance from the one to the other; they pay so little of the reverence due to God, that at last they turn their *impiety* into *argument*, and infer him not to be God, whom they treat so unlike one. And truly this seems to be the grand piece of *Logick*, which has disputed many not only out of *Christian*, but all *native* Religion. How unhappily successful it has proved among us, is too apparent in those impious discourses, which are every where heard; wherein men are arriv'd to such a licentiousness, that *David's Atheist* was a modest puny, who only said in his heart, *There is no God*, and perhaps upon that account shall by some be adjudged to deserve the Epithet the *Psalmist* gives him, and be indeed thought a *fool*, that would not own what would now a-days so certainly denominate him a *wit*, or in the solemn stile, a *Master of reason*. And indeed they will attest the property of the stile, they rather *governing* reason, than being *govern'd* by it; otherwise 'twould be hard to discern, how from different *premisses* the same *conclusion* should be induced: And those who in the late adverse times denied God in revenge of their sufferings, should now pay their gratitude also in the same manner, and renounce him as, or more, loudly, since his signal attestation of that *righteous cause*: His not owning whereof was then their *principal plea*. The truth is, 'tis a little strange, how Atheism could admit such enhansing accessions as we find it has; for it being the completion and highest step of ill, and that to which all others do but subordinately tend, one would think, it should from its first appearance in the world, have been so mature and full grown a sin, as could be capable of no improvement; but so subtilly wicked are these latter days, that we can never be brought to a *non ultra*, but still find something to add to the compleatest sin: Therefore though of those that are really Atheists, one cannot be said to

be more so than another, yet some may be more daringly, and mischievously so; and sure in that respect our *modern* surmount all *former*: They were generally on the defensive part, took up the *tenet*, as a *buckler* against the unwelcome invasions and checks of conscience, and design'd nothing but the more *peaceable enjoyment* of their *lusts*; but *now* men do not only use, but love it; make themselves its avowed *champions*, seek to win it *proselytes*; and in short, appear so zealous for it, as if they made it their *religion* to have none. And God knows, too many such reversed kinds of *evangelists* we now have, who with as great design unteach divinity, as the first propugners taught it; and their *number* and *boldness* have so encreas'd since the return of our *peace*, that sure the next age will have little cause to think *religion* had any share in the *restoration*. Thus have we done our parts to supersede that obligation of serving God in holiness, by leaving no God to serve; and after the most signal attestation of his Deity in our rescue, *we* do, like those *ingrate persons*, who seek to subvert those by whom themselves were establish'd, and *deny* him, because he has *own'd* us.

and is accompanied with fraud, injustice, and wrong-dealing,

42. This is the *holiness* wherewith we have serv'd him, since our being deliver'd from the hands of our enemies, and our *righteousness* has been very proportionable; for if we look into the dealings of all ranks of men, we shall find the same vein of *deceit* run through all transactions. A few years since sequestration and plunderings, those *wholesale robberies* had so over-topt the rest, that like an *epidemick disease*, they had overwhelm'd, if not the *kind*, yet at least the *notice* of all other injustices: But since those *Leviathans* are withdrawn, the *lesser devourers* supply their place; fraud succeeds to violence; and in all places, all occasions of commerce, we still meet with sequestrators. The adulterated wares and false measures in *shops*; the dilatory proceedings, and evasive tricks in *law*; the various and unworthy cheats of *creditors*, and the mean and dishonest advantages which are watcht in all sorts of *contracts*, are too irrefragable proofs hereof. Nay, not only our business, but our very *recreations* expose us to these deceits, as some of our bankrupted gamesters can too sadly witness; what troops of *Harpyes* attend those sports is every man's observation: 'Tis strange so many should yet be to learn the prudence to avoid so known a danger, wherein a man is at once made active and passive in the same robbery, and does himself defraud his *family* of that, whereof he is defrauded by *another*. But amongst these many injustices, there is none wherein men seem generally to find such a gust and sensuality, as those wherein God is concern'd; *twenty* lay-booties humour them not so much as *one* from the clergy; and if the Quakers should be mustered according to that one tenet of not paying tithes, we should indeed find their numbers formidable. How subtle even the rudest persons are in defaulking those dues, we see by every day's experiment, the over-reaching their Minister being the grand triumph of a rustick's wit; so that not only their covetousness, but their vanity is concern'd in it: I know 'tis the usual *apology* for this kind of sacrilege, that either the *maintenance* of the clergy is too much, or their *merit* too little; for the first, I think it may be demonstrated, That there is no *liberal science*, and but few *mechanick trades*, from which a man may not hope as plentiful a *subsistence*, as this affords to the generality of its *professors*: However I shall leave those that make this objection, to dispute it with that authority, which has allotted them this proportion; desiring them to consider, that whatever the support of the clergy is, it costs them nothing; no man having purchas'd more, than what remains of the estate, after his tithe is paid. As to the second, I confess 'tis extremely to be wisht, that the *negligence* and *vice* of some did not give too much *pretence* to the allegation; and to such I cannot but apply the words of our *Saviour*, Matth. 18. 7. *Wo be to the man by whom the offence cometh*; yet certainly 'tis very incompetent, to justifie the detention of their *legal rights*: For till the law which has assign'd them, delegate the forfeiture to me, the greatest *enormities* of my pastor cannot entitle *me* to any thing that is *his*: And indeed what blame soever is really due to *some*, we must expect it should extend to *all*, if the accusers were to have the benefit of the mulct; and (as in the late confusions) all ministers should be made *scandalous*, in order to the makeing them *poor*.

and with the defaming of our neighbour, and endangering his life, by frequent murders, and specially in Duels.

43. 'Twere easie to draw up a far larger catalogue of those *injustices* we daily commit; for as a man has divers other concerns besides his goods, so he may be injur'd in all those: And truly the iniquity of these days seems fully commensurate to all the suffering capacities of mankind. We *weigh* our own and others concerns in very *differing balances*, and *offer* those injuries without any regret, which we can with no patience *suffer*: How nicely jealous is every one of us of his *own* repute, and yet how maliciously prodigal of *other mens*? so that defamation is become one of our main topicks of discourse, furnishes entertainment to all companies; the *present* owe their

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divertisement to the *absent*, and many would be drein'd quite dry, were it not for this reserve, which like an unexhaustible spring, still supplies fresh matter of talk. In like manner, how carefully do we avert any hurt or mutilation of our *own bodies*, and yet how barbarously inconsiderate are we of *others*, to whom we do the greatest out-rages, rather than use any violence to our passion, or restrain an angry humour? Only I confess there is one instance, wherein though we are *unjust*, we are not so *partial*, but expose our selves also; and that is in the case of *duels*, a barbarous custom, wherein 'tis hard to define, whether the wickedness or folly be greater; yet it maintains its way in spight of all the methods God has us'd to make us better or wiser: Of this there are too many, and too noted instances since our restoration, as if we were so enamour'd of *destruction*, that when we are prevented of it from our *enemies*, we seek it from *one another*; or thought *publick peace* so intolerable, that when 'tis cast upon us (as sure ours, if ever any may be said to be) we are fain to take in private quarrels, as our rescue from that dull quiet, and court the utmost *mischiefs*, to avoid the oppression of the greatest *happiness*. Thus perversely do we countermine God's purposes of kindness; and when he has secur'd us, solicitously seek to be deliver'd from our safety; project new *dangers*, and dare his power with a yet harder task, the *delivering us from our selves*: And whilst we thus avert our quiet, 'tis no wonder that we produce no better effects of it; nor fructifie under that, which we will not permit our selves to enjoy.

Our plenty is abused to excess and intemperance,

44. And as upon this general view we appear very ill managers of our peace, so shall we much more, if we reflect on those many particular blessings which are wrapt up in that of which we make so perverse use, that we therein no less violate *sobriety*, than we have already appear'd to do *piety* and *righteousness*; so filling up the measure of our iniquity, by transgressing all the fundamental rules of Christianity, living neither *soberly*, *righteously*, *nor godly in this present world*, Tit. 2. 12. And of those *advantages* which are the appendages to peace, there are two most eminent; *plenty* and *liberty*, both of which are the more remarkable in our present quiet, by how much the deprivation of each was the greater. For the first, we know the *late times of rapine* had torn from many among us their whole subsistence, so entirely despoil'd them, that they were reduc'd to *Job's* condition, and connected the two extreme points of birth and death, by a middle state of the like nakedness and destitution: And to such, our late *restoration* was a kind of civil *resurrection*; rais'd them, like *Elisha's* dry bones, from the most hopeless state, and by a successive possession of their own *inheritances*, made them *heirs to themselves*. And though all were not so wholly divested, yet like those *Canaanites* whom the *Jews* did not extirpate, they were put under tribute: And while persons who knew so well how to exact, were *lords paramount*, a bare being was all could be expected; they seem'd rather stewards, than owners of their *fortunes*, and had rather the trouble, than advantage of their *managery*. And who would not think that this so long want of plenty, should have taught us sobriety in the using it? that *desuetude* should have worn out the skill of *luxury*, and we should not have known how to be riotous? But alas! our memories have been too faithful to us in this particular; no one of our vanities is fallen into oblivion, but on the contrary, the art of voluptuousness so improved, as if all the time that was lost from the *practick*, had been spent in the *theory*, and we had for so many years been contriving new kinds and degrees of excess. Indeed it is too sure we retain'd the *affection*, when we had lost the *power* of rioting; and 'tis not our prosperity seduces us, but we it. For as the *sun*, though it lends its rays to the begetting of the vilest *insects*, yet makes no such production but upon apt matter, *slime* and *putrefaction*; so neither would the most opulent fortune make us sensual, did it not find us dispos'd and prepar'd for it. How forcible those *propensions* are, appears by the multitude of *objects* on which they work; for they had need be strong inclinations, that take in all opportunities, nay, possibilities of actuating themselves; and such 'tis evident ours are, there being nothing capable of ministring to luxury, which we use not to that purpose. Our *meat* is no longer apportioned to our hunger, but our tastes: So that the *stomach* is made merely passive in the matter of eating; serves only to receive those loads we charge it with, whilst its elections and choices are forestall'd by the *palate* or *fancy*; nay, 'tis not permitted so much as a negative voice, not allowed to refuse what is either for kind or quantity destructive to it: We do with studied mixtures force our reluctant appetites, and with all the spells of *Epicurism* conjure them up, that we may have the pleasure of laying them again. Thus unworthily *treacherous* are we to nature, which while we pretend to *relieve*, we *oppress*, by giving her not only beyond her need, but sufferance. And to shew we are no less dexterous in mixing *sins*, than *meats*; our

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very *pride*, though in it self an intellectual vice, mingles with our *gluttony*; every thing is insipid that is not costly, and it is thought an ignoble peasant like thing to eat a plain meal: Nor is he now to be lookt on as a gentleman, whose single ordinary costs not as much as would be (and himself would perhaps some years since have thought) a fair exhibition for some whole families. And that we may not be charg'd with *partial intemperance*, we go not less in that of drink; wherein we are so nice and critical, that 'tis become a special skill and faculty to *judge of liquors*. But how great soever our *curiosity* be, 'tis sure our *excess* is greater, and does not only over-match, but supplant it; there being no drink so unpleasant, which the love of a debauch will not reconcile us to. So great a malice do we bear to our *reason*, that to oppress it, we are content to expose our darling, and do violence to our very *sense*. How unhappily predominant this brutish vice is, need not here be told, since it too evidently attests it self to every man's observation, it no longer seeking the shelter of night and darkness, but impatient of such delay, appears in the broadest light; and he is now a *slow-paced drunkard*, that has not finish'd his *course*, perhaps begun another, before the *sun* has ended his: Nay, so is the scene chang'd, that *sobriety* is become a reproachful thing; such as even those who value it dare not own, and are either driven to *preserve* it by shifts and artifices, or else choose to *abandon* it, rather than hazard the scandal. And certainly this is the great advantage this sin has for the propagating it self; for 'tis impossible *bestiality* should be so universally agreeable to mankind, that all should pursue it out of *appetite* and likeing: 'Tis this fear that engages many in it; and though it hath too many *voluntiers*, yet sure 'tis this *press* that helps it to make up its *numbers*; which as it speaks the great baseness of those who are thus asham'd both of piety and humanity, and had rather cease to be *men*, than appear to be Christians; so is it a sad indication of national impiety, a fatal symptom that we have near fill'd up the measure of our iniquities, and are ripened for the woes denounced against those who call *evil good*, and *good evil*, Isa. 5. 20. which sure was never more palpably done, than in this *instance*, wherein *temperance* is branded for *ill-nature*, and dulness of humour, whilst the most *swinish excess* must pass for *sociableness*, *friendship* and *hospitality*; names which have been so long prostituted, that they have lost their native use, and men have forgot those very distant things to which they originally belong'd: Yet sure such once there were, God made us *sociable creatures*, and we might still continue so upon the strength of that first principle, and need not owe our *intercourse* to our *debaucheries*; no, nor our friendships neither, which have been so far from being preserv'd that way, that there is nothing more obviously and frequently violates them; nay, indeed the whole species of *real* friendship seems to be extinct, since this *fictitious* sort took place. Men think it enough (as indeed 'tis too much) to damn themselves with their friends, and all other communications are transmuted into that of sin; for we daily see those, who cleave the most inseparably in this kind to each other, will yet neither do, nor suffer any thing else: And sure if this be *friendship*, 'tis such a reverst kind of it, as must have as preposterous a *definition*; for none that have yet been given by *Divines* or *Philosophers*, will fit it. The like may be said of *hospitality*, which sure is in its proper nature of a very distant make from this; design'd to *relieve* strangers, not burthen them; to cure their wants indeed, but not by the worse exchange of a surfeit: So that the *ancient* and the *modern* hospitality differ as much as that of *Melchizedeck*, from that of *Circe*; the one refreshes, the other transforms: And how great a shew soever of liberality this latter may have, yet he is not to be thought to have drunk *gratis*, that has paid his *reason* for his *shot*.

45. And to both these parts of intemperance our uncleanness bears full proportion; *to lust and uncleanness*, the one *makes provision for the flesh*, and the other *fulfils the lusts thereof*. To how brutish an impudence this sin is grown, is too visible, we need not trace men into their privacies and recesses, themselves willingly proclaim their guilts; nay, dread nothing so much as the opinion of being innocent: Yea, so out-dated a *virtue* is modesty now become, that even that sex to which it was once accounted the greatest ornament, have put it off, look on it as a piece of *rusticity* and *country-breeding*. Whether this pulling down the *fence* be an indication they are willing to lie *common*, I shall not determine: But sure that very free and confident behaviour now in use, is too apt to invite assaults, and takes off all that extenuation of crime, which was wont to be allowed that sex, upon the supposition of their being seduc'd. Thus do we publish our sin as *Sodom*, and if we consider how much boldness it has gain'd since the return of our *prosperity*, 'twill be probable that ours also has been fomented by *fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness*, Ezek. 16. 49. That our plenty is very subservient to it, appears by the *vast expence* wherewith many men manage this vice:

And that our idleneſs is ſo too, is no leſs evident by the *large portions of time* that are ſpent in thoſe purſuits, it being, as the great deſign, ſo the eſpecial buſineſs of too many mens lives. As for the *remedy* which God has aſſign'd, it ſerves now only to exaſperate the *diſeaſe*. Marriage with too many only advances ſimple fornication to adultery, and ſuperadds perjury to uncleanneſs; thoſe ſacred bands are like *Samſon's* withs, broken upon every aſſault of the *Philiſtines*, and the very thought of being confin'd, makes men more apt to range: For alas! 'tis not their *needs*, but their *fancies* they are to provide for, and that is ſo endleſs, that the greateſt liberty of *polygamy* would never ſatisfie it: The ſame quarrel would lie then to multiplied wives, which does now to ſingle; I mean, that they were their own: And how numerous ſoever their *flock* were, 'twould not ſecure their poor neighbour's only *lamb*; eſpecially when 'tis conſider'd, that in this they gratifie two ſins at once, their *vanity* as well as their *luſt*, their complacence in *undermining* the huſband, being generally as great, as that in enjoying the wife. And if *pride* abſtractedly and in its own nature be, as *Solomon* ſays, *an abomination to the Lord*, certainly when 'tis thus complicated, it muſt be infinitely more ſo, and aſcertain a concurrence of thoſe *judgments*, which are ſingly threatned to each of thoſe *ſins*: What thoſe are I wiſh guilty perſons would ſeriouſly ponder, and then they would ſurely think their momentary pleaſures much over-bought. But alas! ſuch a faſcinating ſin this is, as allows men no liberty of conſideration, they go on, as the *Wiſe man* ſays, *Prov.* 7. 22. with the ſame ſtupidity that an *ox goeth to the ſlaughter*, or a *fool to the correction of the ſtocks*; and while every body elſe obſerves the effects of their vice in their waſted *bodies* and ruin'd *eſtates*, themſelves are the laſt that diſcern it, purſue the *courſe* till the very laſt remains of ſtrength and wealth are exhauſted, and nothing left them but *diſeaſe* and *beggary*. Of the truth of this, there have been too many ſad examples, though it ſeems not yet enough to give caution to others.

and to pride in apparel, furniture, and equipage;

46. And to theſe *luſts of the fleſh* we ſpare not to add thoſe of the *eye* alſo; for ſo ſurely we may properly call all thoſe *luxuries*, which adapt themſelves peculiarly to that faculty; ſuch are the *gaiety* of apparel, *richneſs* of furniture, and all the *ſplendor* of equipage, which has no propriety to any other ſenſe, but that of ſeeing, and is loſt if it be not lookt on: And though theſe ſeem to differ much from that *covetouſneſs* which St. *John* is ſuppos'd to comprehend in that phraſe, the one being the *tenacity*, the other the *profuſion* of money; yet they are but ſeveral branches of the ſame ſin, and are diverſified only by a various application to the *object*; for in ſtrict ſpeaking, he that covets gold and ſilver to lay on his *back*, is as properly *covetous*, as he that deſigns it only to fill his *coffers*. But beſides the propriety theſe *exceſſes* have to that title, they have no leſs claim to that enſuing, *The pride of life*; it being evident that they are both effects and fomenters of pride: And ſure this ſets but an ill character upon them, that when the *Apoſtle* has divided all the *luſts* of the world into *three ſorts*, theſe bid ſo fair to *two* of them. I would not here be underſtood to condemn that decency and moderate expence, which agree to the ſeveral ranks and qualities of perſons, there being not only a *lawfulneſs*, but ſome kind of *civil neceſſity* for ſuch diſtinctions; nor is the levelling principle fitter to be admitted in habit, than in title or eſtate: That which I accuſe is quite another thing, it being that inordinate profuſion, which does not only exceed the ability and fortune of the perſon, but the proportion of his rank and condition, and ſo confounds that diſtinction it ſhould preſerve, and levels us the wrong way; it being more tolerable that all ſhould be *peaſants*, than all *lords*. And this is the irregularity that many ſeem to affect, there being not only an emulation of pomp and bravery among equals, but thoſe of the moſt diſtant qualities, there ſeeming now no other *meaſure*, than the utmoſt extent of their *money* or *credit*; the latter whereof is often ſo ſtretcht, that it not only cracks it ſelf, but by an unhappy contagion breaks thoſe it deals with, and like a *granado*, tears towns in pieces: The many ruin'd families of *tradeſmen* do too ſadly atteſt this. Would God our *gallants* would conſider how unequal it is, that many ſhould want *neceſſary clothing*, only to maintain the *ſuperfluity* of theirs; an injuſtice which not only upon a *religious*, but *politick* account deſerves the ſevereſt reproof; and ſince *divine* laws will not reſtrain it, 'twere well if *humane* were provided: Though I confeſs, 'twere not eaſie to find out penalties to deter thoſe, whom the wants ſo uſually attending theſe exceſſes will not diſcourage. This ſort of *vanity* was once thought peculiar to *women*; and though I cannot ſay that the ſexes have exchang'd faults (becauſe each ſtill keeps its own, together with thoſe of the other) yet 'tis evident they have communicated them; and as the *women* of this age have tranſcrib'd *maſculine* vices, ſo the *men* have *feminine*; this particularly, wherein they ſeem fully to anſwer the copy, they being as critically knowing

in all the mysteries of vanity, and as diligent in reducing their *speculations* to *practice*, as any the most extravagant female. Indeed both the one and the other pursue this *folly* with so great an expence of care, time, and money, as if to be fine and happy were the same thing, and their *bodies* had been design'd for their clothes, rather than their *clothes* for their bodies.

47. And now when all these luxuries are to be serv'd, it had need be an exorbitant plenty that shall supply them; and that will unfold the riddle so frequent among us, of so many being poorer since they recovered their estates, than when they wanted them: Our *revenue*, how large soever, is so clogg'd and incumbred with our *vices*, that they moulder away, and only serve to carry other mens with them, by giving credit to run in debt. There are indeed no such unmerciful *exactors* as our own lusts; the one gleans after the other, till they induce such a scarcity as the Prophet *Joel* describes, 1. 4. *That which the palmer-worm hath left, hath the locust eaten, and that which the locust hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten, and that which the canker-worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten.* So that in effect, we have only changed our oppressors, and are as much or more exhausted by our own sins, as we were before by other mens; with this woful circumstance, that now we have the *guilts*, as well as the *sufferings*. Thus do we rob our selves, and create *want* in the midst of all that *abundance* God has given us, using our plenty as the *Benjamites* did the *Levite's* concubine, *Judg.* 19. force and prostitute it, till we destroy it; and the similitude holds in this also, that what we thus violate is not our own; for let us fancy what we will, certainly our *superfluites* are more the *poors* right, than *ours*, assign'd to them by God, the grand Proprietor. So that our excesses have, besides their proper *guilt*, that of *injustice* superadded; and when the cry of the *poor* shall be joyned to those of our riots, they will certainly be too clamorous to let vengeance any longer sleep.

which hath occasion'd the ruin of many families, and great estates.

48. This is the account we can give of our *plenty*, and that of our *liberty* is not much better; 'tis not long since that *arbitrary tyranny* expir'd, which gave us no other *measures* of our duties or punishments, than the *will* or *avarice* of the imposers: And then how did we gasp to be under the conduct and protection of *known determinate laws?* Yet now we have them, who considers them, or is regulated by them? Between the *licentiousness* of inferiors, and the *remissness* of superiors, they are rendred things only of *form*, not *use*; for while the one violates, and the other connives, what can they signifie? And though there be never so many *new* laws made to assert the *old*, yet we see they serve for little but to partake of the same contempt with the others, and are but like the *Chimæra's* of an *Utopian state*, sagely contriv'd, but to no purpose. 'Tis the execution of laws that gives them a real and effective being, and without that, amidst our great volumes, we are yet destitute, and may too probably experiment the truth of that *axiom*, that *'tis better to live where nothing is lawful, than where all things are.* Indeed if we remember how the statutes of *Omri* were kept, with what a tameness the severest impositions of the *late usurpers* were submitted to, we have reason to think *coercion* is the surest principle of *vulgar obedience*; though withal it sets but an ill mark upon us, who know so much better how to be *slaves*, than *subjects*. And as we are restored to our *civil* liberty, so as a branch or consequent of that, we are to our *personal* also. We were lately in the condition Christ foretold to St. *Peter*, carried by others whither we would not, *John* 21. 18. but now we gird our selves, and go whither we will; and alas! what use do many of us make of this *freedom?* Is it not visible, that neither our publick nor private affairs are the better attended? but on the contrary, we are in a restless pursuit of impertinent or vicious *pastimes*, go pilgrimages to our *pleasures*, wander about from this sport, that meeting to another, till many of us forget we have any other concerns in the world, and are as much strangers to our own homes, as when we were forcibly detain'd thence: And for such I know not whether the former restraint be not elegible, to be a *prisoner*, being a kind of rescue to him, that would otherwise be a *vagrant*.

Our liberty is abused to the breach of the Laws, and contempt of the Government;

49. These are the *uses* we make of those *advantages* whereof God has re-possest us. I know 'tis too envious a task to distribute these accusations to every rank and order of men among us; I have here given them in the lump, and wish that not only such degrees, but each *person* would adapt to himself his *peculiar share*, wherein contrary to other *dividends*, I fear the only immodesty and injustice too will generally be, for every one not to carve liberally for himself. However, 'tis sure in the gross they make up the *character* of a most barbarously *ungrateful nation*. God was pleased to return our peace before we had forsaken our sins, as if he meant to try our ingenuity;

which is an argument of horrible ingratitude and disingenuity.

 that

that we, who had been so much worse than beasts under the former method, that no stripes would discipline us, might have this advantage to redeem our credit, and be drawn with these cords of a man: But we have put off not only *piety*, but *humanity*, and are equally untractable to all methods. And now who can refrain from *Moses's passionate Apostrophe; Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise!* Deut. 32. 6. Unwise indeed, that from the most benign *purposes* of God, extract nothing but our own *mischief*; are the poorer for his liberalities, and the worse for his goodness; by a preposterous use so wear out our blessings, that they cease to be, at least to be *blessings*! And if they once fall from that, there is no middle form for them to assume; they convert into the direct contrary, and become the fatallest *curses*, more heavy than those which were originally design'd as such; that degeneration adding malignity, and no *fury* being so extreme, as that which bottoms upon repell'd and *irritated love*. God's mercies are like those *pictures*, which according to the different position of the beholder, carry different representations; if we will still stand on the wrong side, and not take them in their more *amiable* appearance, we shall find they can put on a *dreadful*: His goodness will not be finally unoperative; if we will not permit it to lead us to *repentance*, 'twill drive us to *destruction*. I am sure we have all reason to expect he should exert his power as eminently against us, as he has done for us; unless perhaps he sees that is not necessary to our ruin; for indeed let him but stand by, and not interpose his omnipotence for us, he may trust us to be his *executioners*, our vices having a *natural* as well as *moral* efficacy to destroy us. And who knows whether that be not the reason of his seeming connivance, that he forbears to strike us, to give us up to those more fatal wounds we inflict on our selves? this alas! we have too much cause to fear, for 'tis sure, 'tis not our *innocence* that gives us impunity, but 'tis more than probable, 'tis our *incorrigibleness*; that God gives us over with a *Why should ye be smitten any more?* will not prostitute his judgments; but as the basest of *malefactors*, leave us to the basest of *executioners*, and let our iniquities become our ruin. This, as it is the severest purpose God can entertain towards us, so 'tis our most important concern to avert. And O that we, who have so perversly resisted all the designs of his *love*, would now try to defeat that of his *anger*, rob him of those intestine avengers within our own breasts, those *fleshly lusts which fight against the soul*, 1 Pet. 2. 10. which do not only provoke, but execute his wrath, and make us more miserable than *Hell* it self could do without them; and God knows 'tis more than time for us to seek and escape from so formidable mischiefs: O let us not contract one minute's delay, let us cast our selves at the feet of our offended God, and as those who are condemn'd to disgraceful executions, use to petition for some death of less infamy, as a *boon* and *favour*; so let us beg, that he will please to think us worth his *own correction*; that whatsoever we suffer from his hand, yet that we may not, like to *Herod*, be deliver'd up to the loathsom fortune of being devour'd by our own putrefaction. In a word, let us form *David's choice* into an importunate *prayer*, and earnestly beg that we may *fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of men*, at least not of *our selves*, who are more to be dreaded than all our other *enemies*.

God will call us one day to an account for all these things.

50. Indeed till we do thus, our prosperities are far from real, and do in this justifie our most mutinous repinings, that we are never the better for them, nay, much the worse; yet since 'tis only we that have enervated them, they will stand upon our account in their proper weight and value: When our *receipts* are summed up, God will charge us with them, not as those empty *useless things* we have made them, but as those great and *solid blessings* he intended them. And certainly this is most deplorable ill managery, to reserve nothing to our selves but the *burthen* and *account* of our good things; to enjoy nothing, and yet be answerable for all. In secular things men usually pay with some regret for those things, of which they have only anticipated the *use* But with what dismal reluctances shall we come to pay for these, of which we have made no advantage? and must therefore pay the dearer, because we have not; it being not so much the things, as our employing of them to our benefit, whereof God will exact account. His *anger* is then only incens'd, when we resist his *love*: And his only quarrel to us is, for frustrating his design of making us happy. And sure those well deserve his wrath, that will provoke it on such terms; yet so perverse is the *choice*, as of all sinners in general, so especially of *this nation* at this time, who have all before us which might make us happy in both worlds, if we did not madly affect to be so in neither. God grant we may recover the sobriety to make *wiser elections*, before it be out of our power to make any, and we be found to stand to the mischiefs of our own wild option.

51. The reader will perhaps think I have gone beyond the limits of a moderate digression, but the too great *copiousness* of the theme must be my *excuse*: Such overgrown vices cannot well be drawn in little; and where there is such a multitude, the most superficial view of each is rather proportionable to a *distinct tract*, than to the *few pages* it has borrowed in this. My greater fear is, that the event may prove it impertinent, there being not much hope that a *private whisper* shall be heard by those, who are deaf to the *loudest calls* of Heaven, and have made no other *use* of those various and signal providences we have been under, than to defeat the *design* of them.

CHAP. IX.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes in general.

Christian Religion much injur'd by our over eager disputes and contentions about it,

1. THese are some of those many artifices, whereby Satan, like a cunning *picklock*, slily robs us of our grand *treasure*, the power and efficacy of our Christianity, and leaves us only the empty *casket*, the name and formal profession; that which serves only to make us *proud*, not *rich*; *confident*, not *safe*: And God knows, so many are daily thus befool'd by him, so many fall as preys to these his *stratagems*, as might, one would think, glut the eagerest malice, and supersede all farther designs: But so insatiate is this grand devourer, that *retail prizes*, though never so frequent, do rather enrage, than satisfie his *appetite*: He is enemy not only to this, or that man, but to *mankind* in gross; and therefore, as if he fear'd that even his malice might not prove indefatigable enough for so many distinct pursuits, he contrives more compendious methods of destruction; frames such *engines*, as take off whole ranks, nay, troops; compounds such active *poyson*, as like a pestilence, kills multitudes at once. It is too trivial a mischief to annoy the *outward parts*, it is his mastery to spread an unseen venom in the *bowels*, thence to diffuse it self throughout, mix with the vital spirit, and convert that *kindly heat* which should animate, into those wild *irregular flames*, which ravine and consume. And this is done by that pestilential spirit of *division*, that heat of *disputation*, which has for so many ages possest and wasted the *Catholick Church*; and by an unhappy kind of magick transform'd the zeal of Christian *practice* into an itch of unchristian *dispute*; made the *questions* about our *Creed* more numerous than the *letters* of it, and by multitudes and contrariety of *paraphrases*, so confounded and obscur'd the *text*, that what was antiently the badge and *tessera* of Christian communion, serves us for no other purpose, but as an occasion of breaking it.

which have turn'd the ancient simplicity of Christians in to wrath and bitterness towards one another.

2. So long as the Church retain'd the *simplicity* of Christian doctrine, lookt on her *faith* as the foundation of her *obedience*, and endeavour'd to propagate to her children such an understanding of the one, as was most apt to promote the other; she happily made good the title *Christ* gives her, *Cant.* 6. of his *Love*, his *Dove*, his *undefiled* one; but when the *serpent* had once got into this paradise, he infus'd his *subtilties*, and nice intricacies into mens brains; and lest that should not be ruinous enough, his *venom* also into their hearts. Then began all those unhappy *metamorphoses*, in comparison of which, those of the poets are as *trivial* as they are *fabulous*; then that *faith* which was once inseparably joyn'd with the *patience* of the Saints, forsook that tame company, and linkt it self with the most contrary qualities of *wrath* and *bitterness*; and those whose profession it was to resist unto blood, striving against sin, *pursued* to blood those that resisted them in any of their speculations: Then that passive valour which had rendred them so venerable to their Heathen enemies, converted some, tired out others, and amaz'd all; sadly degenerated into that active malice, which from *persecuted Christians*, entitled them to that monstrous stile of *Christian persecutors*. And that *ardent love*, which had offered up so many Holocausts to God, was supplanted by that *fiery hatred*, that made no less acceptable oblations to Satan.

The Devil at first raised up Heresies to disturb the peace, and break the unity of the Church;

3. This miserable and destructive *change* was so much the interest of the enemy of souls, that we cannot wonder he should so studiously promote it; and indeed never did he at once so approve his *malice* and *subtilty*, I would I could not say success also, as in this *design*; in comparison whereof, all his other projects speak him but a puny; this is his one *Goliath stratagem*, which has serv'd him not only to *defie*, but even *defeat the armies of the living God*.

4. Nor

4. Nor is his sagacity more observable in the *choice*, and main drift of the design, than in the *ways* of effecting it; had he brought into the *primitive* Church those large scrolls of disputable points, wherewith he has filled the modern, that more charitable age must needs have startled and discern'd, that that *seeming jealousie* for truth was indeed nothing but a *real design* against peace; and would surely never have parted with that sacred *depositum*, that precious legacy so lately bequeath'd by Christ, for those vain janglings, those school subtilties, which now entertain the world. But as he that would divert a man from the *guard* of some important treasure, alarms him in some other of his greatest *interests*; so he at first raises up *heresies* of the greatest magnitude, whose blasphemous consequences so shook the whole fabrick of religion, that what was *Uzzah*'s rashness, seem'd then every man's advised duty, to *put his hand to the upholding of the tottering ark*. How could those who had been baptiz'd into the faith of the blessed Trinity, suffer the *Arians* to rob them of the second Person, the *Macedonians* of the third, the *Valentinians* and *Manichees* so to despise the first, as to set up against him a rival principle of being? How could those who had so solemnly renounc'd the world, the flesh, and the Devil, see them all bowed to by the temporizing, unclean, idolatrous *Gnosticks*? These were such invasions as seemed to commissionate all that could wield the sword of the Spirit, to take it up and engage in this warfare. But all this while 'twas a sad *dilemma* to which the Church was driven; if she gave countenance to these *seducers*, she betrayed her *faith*; if she entred the *contest*, she violated her *unity*; the one would undermine her *foundation*, the other would make a breach in her *walls*.

and hath occasion'd a great deal of quarrel and contention (in or) about lesser matters,

5. And the Devil was too old an artist to lose the *advantage*, he knew well, that even a just and necessary *defence* does, by giving men acquaintance with war, take off somewhat from the abhorrence of it, and insensibly dispose them to farther *hostilities*, and therefore he fail'd not to provide *sparks* for that matter, which was now grown so combustible; nor did he always send them from the *bottomless pit*, but sometimes borrowed fire from the *altar*, to consume the votaries, and by the mutual collision of well-meant *zeal*, set even orthodox Christians in a *flame*. A memorable instance of this was the *dispute about Easter*; wherein, while the veneration they had of the glorious Resurrection of *Christ*, prompted them to commemorate it in the exactest manner they could, the *serpent* creeps into this paradise, and though they had the same common end, yet on occasion of some little dissenting in the way, the heat of *devotion* insensibly degenerated into that of *contention*, and by being very tenacious of a circumstance of that *celebration*, they lost the more essential requisite, that of *Charity*; kept the feast indeed, but with the leven of malice, and absurdly commemorate the redintegration of his *natural* body, by mutilating and dividing his *mystical*. So likewise in the business of rebaptization, while one side in a pious abhorrence of *heresie*, thought the stain like that of original sin, could not be done away by any purgation less solemn than that of baptism, and the other in a just reverence of ancient *custom*, and jealousie of *innovation* opposed it; the dispute lasted, till the scene was changed, and those who deliberated of the manner of *receiving* hereticks into the Church, were themselves as such *turn'd* out of it. No less well-meant were the *originals* of the *Novatian* and *Donatist* heresies, and as equally unhappy were their *issues*: For in them all, when bitter *zeal* was once fermented, through its aptitude to receive, and the Devil's vigilance to administer occasions, the *orthodoxy* or heresie of lives soon became terms out-dated, and men were measur'd only by *opinions*. That *sword of the Spirit*, which was at first design'd against vicious practices, had its edge turn'd against *speculative* notions; in so much, that at last like that of *Joab*, 2 Sam. 20. 8. it had got such an aptness to fall out, that it was always a ready instrument of execution, till even a philosophical point, as that of the *Antipodes*, was resolv'd with an *anathema*; and not to know the system of this *present* world, made forfeiture of that *to come*.

which that wicked one hath improv'd into innumerable sects and schisms which swarm in the Church.

6. But alas! these, though great defections from primitive unity, were but modest essays, and feeble assaults, compar'd with those which infested the succeeding ages: *This root of bitterness* was then but a *probationer* in the soil, and though it sent forth some off-sets to preserve its kind, yet *Satan* was fain to be at some pains to cherish and nurse them up, placed them under the shadow of the *Sanctuary*, and got them like the treacherous ivy, supported by that *piety* they were designed to destroy. But it was not long e'er they had got firmer rooting and strength, not only to propagate, but multiply. Every dispute in religion grew *prollifical*, and in ventilating one question, many new ones were started: And as *questions* grew numerous, so did *sects* too; every opinion almost constituted a new party, and those again subdivided into many

others; so that of all the first violators of primitive unity, we scarce find any, who did not revenge their *schism* upon themselves, by separating one from another, as they had all done from the *Church*; till at last the progeny both of sects and opinions grew so numerous, that he who would exact an account, must be sent like *Abraham*, to the sky, or to the shore; the stars or sands being as apt a subject of *arithmetick* as they. Whence it is brought to pass, that *Satan* now may leave his toilsom labour of compassing the earth; men do his business for him, giving him leisure to be only a chearful *spectator* of their *divinity-prizes*; the bloody combats of *ecclesiastick gladiators*.

Our disputes are now become a particular art or science in the schools.

7. And that he may be secur'd never to want that pleasing divertisement, the *later ages* have been careful to train him up *combatants*, it being now become a distinct sort of learning, a new species of divinity, to raise nice *questions*, create new *difficulties*, branch out with fond *distinctions* our holy faith, which the pious simplicity of the first Christians receiv'd to practice; not to read upon as an *anatomy*, unbowel and dissect to try experiments, much less to bring into the *theatre*, there made to fight and bleed, to shew men sport, and try the skill of the unhappy sword-men, the masters of defence. *The form of sound words*, which in its native frame and constitution was most enlivening and salubrious, dissolv'd and melted by *chymical preparation*, ceases to be nutritive; and after all the labours of the *alimbeck*, and hopes of an *elixir*, insensibly evaporates, and vanishes to air; or leaves in the recipient a foul *empyreuma*, or fretting corrosive. An endless dotage about names and words, and then as endless a quarrel for them, appearing the commensurate *effect* of the long studies of those *distillers* in divinity, who boast its sublimation.

whose too curious and subtle distinctions have promoted contention to the loss of mutual love and charity.

8. It is indeed a thing worthy of the greatest both wonder and lamentation, to see how the plainest, and most *simple proposition*, when it falls into the hands of these *artists*, is mangled and disjoynted, is rarified, exalted and refin'd: He whose leisure, or indeed whose life would serve him to survey all the subtle divisions and distinctions of the *school men*, would sure resolve, they had the power of working *miracles*: *Questions* in their hands multiplying in the breaking, like the *loaves* in our *Saviour's*. But sure the event of the miracles are very disparate, no solid nourishment being deriv'd by the one, but on the contrary, stones given us instead of bread, and those too for the worst purposes, even to fling at one another, as if because *stoning* was the death of the first *Christian martyr*, we design'd his *charity* to the same fate with himself; *that divine gospel grace* having since fall'n under as thick a shower, and with this sharp aggravation too, that whereas he suffer'd from *Jews*, *Christians* are become its *executioners*: Whilst those who pretend to be *champions* of the faith, irrefragable, angelical, and seraphical *doctors*, not only fill the Church with quarrels whilst they live, but bequeath them in their writings to posterity; as *Zisca* is said to have done his skin, to be made an incentive to war and confusion.

The plainness and simplicity of the Christian Religion is perplexed and confounded with philosophical niceties.

9. It was the policy of *Julian* to shut up the fountains of humane learning from the Christian youth, lest they should there gain such acuteness, as might render them the more formidable adversaries to *Paganism*: But could he have foreseen that they would have employed those weapons not against the *common enemy*, but *one another*, he would surely have revers'd the stratagem, freely opened those *magazines*, whence they might furnish themselves for their mutual ruin, and have as solicitously *promoted* their learning, as ever he *obstructed* it. I am very far from abetting their arrogant folly, who either decry humane learning in general, or make it such a *Moabite*, or *Ammonite*, that however it be admitted in *civil converse*, must be interdicted the *Sanctuary*. Our religion prescribes us rational, not brutish sacrifices, and therefore despises not any of those *advantages* which may improve our reason, exalt the *man*, and depress the *beast* in us: Yet sure we shall derogate very impiously from Christ's prophetick office, if we allow not divinity to be the supreme and noblest science; such as is to be serv'd and attended, not regulated and govern'd by those inferior: But that just order seems now to be inverted, *divine* learning is brought down to *humane*; the *simplicity* of Christian doctrine so perplext and confounded with *philosophical niceties*, that *Plato* and *Aristotle* are become the umpires of our religion, and we must go ask *Heathens* how far we shall be *Christians*. Those *deep things of God*, as the Apostle calls them, 1 *Cor.* 2. 10. and of which he pronounces the natural man an incompetent judge, are yet brought before *that tribunal*, subjected to be scann'd by rules of art: But alas! our line is too short to sound those depths. Men rashly undertake to understand *incomprehensible*, to order *infinite*, define *ineffable* things: And then no wonder if their conceptions differ; for where there is no visible truth, wherein to centre, *error* is as wide as mens *fancies*, and may wander to eternity: While

multitudes

multitudes run careers in the dark, it is not strange to have them justle, and overthrow each other.

We should be more careful to practise the plain truths of the Gospel, than curiously enquire into the mysteries thereof.

10. And doubtless were the *controversies* which have so long harassed the Church, throughly examin'd, many of them would be found of this nature. An *humble belief* has been judg'd too sluggish and dull an exercise for men of acute parts, and therefore they would not take *faith's word*, that so it is, unless *reason* will be her *surety*, and shew them how; but sure it had been much for the *peace* of the Church, and *safety* of souls, if mysteries hah been permitted to be *mysteries*; that those sublimer parts of our *faith* had been entertain'd with more veneration, and less of *disquisition*, and that while even the learnedst do acknowledge them to be *abysses*, they would not confute that confession, by attempting to *fathom* them. But alas! so preposterous has been the procedure, that those things which were indeed inexplicable, have been rackt and tortur'd to discover themselves, while in the mean time, the plainer, and more accessible *truths*, as if despicable while easie, are clouded and obscur'd; so many subtle *queries* rais'd about them, that the *theorick* of Christianity is become harder than the *practick*; a grace is much more readily acquir'd, than defin'd, and that *key of knowledge*, which should give us entrance into the closets and recesses of religion, is by so much tampering and wrenching made *useless*; serves only to busie us at the door, and so in effect proves rather a *bar to keep* us *out*, than a *key to let* us *in*. Thus perverse are the *contradictions* of humane deprav'd nature, which like our *first parents* take it unkindly, that God has reserv'd any thing from us, and boldly attempt to break down his *enclosures*, to rob him of his *peculiar*; and yet in the mean time, as industriously contrive to rob our selves of our own, by cancelling both parts of God's distribution, neither leaving *secret things to the Lord our God*, nor *the revealed ones to us and our children*, Deut. 29. 29. Certainly the first propagators of our faith proceeded at another rate; they well knew that not the *brain*, but the *heart* was the proper *soil* for that celestial plant, and therefore did not amuse their *proselytes* with curious questions, but set them to the active part of their religion. We see what brief and plain instructions St. *Peter* gives his *catechumeni*, Acts 2. 38. *Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins*: And this it seems as a full preparation for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which he there promises upon these only conditions. This was that vigorous seed which at once *sprung up* suddenly, and *rooted deep* too, and produc'd the liberal harvest of that day: But sure had those three thousand souls been catechized by our modern *casuists*, we had seen a wide difference, not only in the expedition, but success. In like manner we see *Acts* 8. how short a creed qualified in St. *Philip*'s judgment for the eunuch's baptism: And we find St. *Paul*, whose education enabled him for the subtilest definitions, yet delivers his whole doctrine in this *compendium*, Acts 20. 21. *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*; and 'tis observable how he introduces this with a profession, that *he had kept back nothing that was profitable for them*, ver. 20. and seconds it, ver. 27. with another, *That he had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God*; from whence 'tis obvious for the shallowest discourser to infer, that the whole counsel of God, as far as it is incumbent for man to know, at least *necessitate medii*, is compriz'd in that one breviate of evangelical truth: And certainly whilst all the division of these generals was the distributing them into *practice*, they were found most fertile seminaries of all virtue; but when they came to be *dichotomiz'd*, and canton'd out into curious aerial notions, they lost their *prolifick* nature: That fruitful land became a wilderness, a wild and intricate maze, where men sooner lose *themselves*, than find either *truth*, or *holiness*.

Primitive Christians desir'd rather to believe and adore, than contend and dispute about their duty.

11. When Christianity first attested it self by *miracles*, it produced in the hearts of its converts a firm assent to the truth of the *doctrine*, and an awful reverence and adoration of *that God*, who had given such power unto men, awaking them to an enquiry after *duty*, so to propitiate that *Omnipotence*, whose fury it appear'd impossible to bear: And this sure was a much more *genuine effect*, than if they had busied themselves in those many *unprofitable curiosities*, nice, yet bold enquiries into the divine attributes, which now a-days serve only to supplant that pious veneration we owe to them.

12. In like manner the comprehensive enunciation of *Christ*, Mark 16. 16. *He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damn'd*, was received by the first Christians, as the condition on which the two so distant states of salvation or damnation depended, and accordingly excited their diligence, to attain the *one*, and avoid the *other*. And this certainly was a much more concerning employment, than to have entertain'd themselves with the modern dispute, whether some antecedent decree of God had not irreversibly determin'd them to the one or the other; a *disquisition* that

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has serv'd only to keep us *idly busie*, set our heads a working, but folds up our *hands* like *Solomon's* sluggard in our bosoms. So also when St. *Paul* affirms it the design of *Christ's giving himself for us, to purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;* the *primitive* Christians had no other design than to comport with that his purpose, to be what he died to make them, and to attest their *zeal* to good works, by being actually rich in them. They took *Christ's* word, *That he that gave the meanest dole for his sake, should not lose his reward;* thought themselves sure enough upon his promise, and never disputed the proportion either of worth or congruity between the work and wages; and had the *modern* done the like, our *works* had not so unhappily evaporated into *words*, we had talkt less, and done more.

The multiplying of Creeds and opinions hath divided the Faith, and decay'd the life of Religion.

13. 'Twere easie to draw the parallel through all the points, which busied the devotion of the *first* ages, and the curiosity of the *latter*: By all which it would be evident, how much Christian doctrine has *lost* in its efficacy, since it *gain'd* in its bulk; how we have embased our *coin* by multiplying it, and have divided our *sum* into so many, and so small fractions, as our *arithmetick* can scarce *number*, never *unite*. We should think him very ridiculous, that should hope to advance his *crop*, by grinding the *corn* he sows; yet, methinks, this has been the method of our spiritual husbandmen, who have scarce suffered one grain of our faith to escape entire. 'Tis said that the *Ant*, when she lays in her winter stock, bites the ends of the *corn*, as being *naturalist* enough to know, that will certainly prevent its sprouting. And sure that little contemptible creature, whom *Solomon* appoints to preach *industry* to the *sluggard*, may in this point read *Philosophy* too, to our greatest *Doctors*; convince them that the seed which they mangle with so many distinctions and divisions, will never spring up into Christian *practice*: It will rather be like the *Dragons* teeth *Cadmus* is said to have sown, whose immediate production was a *hostile band*, combating one another. A *fable*, which God knows, we have found too sadly *moraliz'd* in our school-contentions, only with this unhappy difference, that ours are more *immortal*; our *Serpentine* breed fight, but never die, oppose, but destroy not one another.

The Church is overrun with schism and contention,

14. And then 'twill not appear strange to see the first seeds of discord so prodigiously encreas'd, that they now over-spread the face of the earth: For, whereas in all other things there is a succession, one generation goes, and another comes, and so though the *species* continue, the *individuals* perish; these seem to have the accurst privilege of propagating and not expiring, and to have reconcil'd the procreativeness of *corporeal* with the duration of *incorporeal* substances: This is such an advantage towards their *multiplication*, that we may grieve, but cannot wonder to find them swarm; not like *Bees* to bring profit, but like *Locusts*, to devour every green thing in the land; nor is it now in the power of all the *Magicians* of *Egypt* to cast them out; for were it possible ever to become *Satan's* interest to suppress them, he would certainly find himself in the case of one of his young conjurers, to have rais'd more spirits than he could lay. Mens now *irritated passions*, and formed *interests*, the great fomenters of disputes, would prove too *sturdy Devils* even for *Beelzebub* himself to exercise.

which is now kept up in smaller and lesser matters.

15. But 'tis too sure his kingdom will never so divide against it self; it suits not only with his *nature*, but with his *ends* to perpetuate our strifes, and therefore, as if our doctrinal debates were not enough to secure his purpose, he has an auxiliary troop of ritual differences to attach us. The *Leprosie*, which infests the solider parts of our religion, has past from the *body* to the very *garments*; the most exterior *adherencies*, habits, gestures, days, every thing that has but the remotest subserviency to Piety, are become the *objects* of fierce contests, and have so encreas'd the number and heat of our quarrels, that 'tis unnecessary, perhaps impossible to add more; if he can but keep up these, as God knows, he is too like to do, his kingdom will be competently guarded, they being his greatest *security* against that *power of Godliness*, that vital force of Christianity, he so much dreads; that they are so, is obvious enough to him that takes but the grossest confus'd view of them. But that we may better discern the degrees of his *advantage* and our own *mischief*, 'twill not be amiss to consider them more attentively, make some distinct observations, not of *all*, for that were endless, but of *some* of their most eminent *effects*; which we shall find so pernicious and destructive, as sufficiently speak their relation, and subserviency to the great *Abaddon*.

Contention about things indifferent, makes us backward to those that are of greater concern;

16. And in the first place, if we consider them only *privately*, as they supplant and justle out our greater concerns, we shall find them sadly mischievous, indeed to such a degree, that were they not chargeable with any *positive* ill, they were by this their mere negative force competent instruments of our *ruine*. Did they actually convey their venom, yet while they substract our nourishment, their effects will be sure to be deadly; *grace* as well as *nature*, being liable to be starv'd, as well as poysoned. *Christianity*

anity is not a dull unactive, but stirring busie state, and therefore we still find it in the *Gospel* represented under the *Metaphors*, which imply the greatest industry and activity; 'tis a *trade*, a *watch*, a *race*, a *combate*, and it assigns us tasks enough to justifie the propriety of the *Tropes*: And therefore as on the one hand, the sleepy professor will at last find he has but dreamt of those glorious rewards he expects; so on the other, he that frames himself another *scheme*, that labours, but not in God's vineyard, that busies himself in things extrinsick to that one great *sphere of motion*, the evangelical precepts, will finally discern, that he has but rolled *Sysiphus* his stone, espous'd a *toil*, under which he may indeed be *weary* and heavy *laden*, but will never find *rest* to his Soul.

which is the Devil's policy to keep up our Differences and Divisions.

17. And then what can be more perfectly adapted to his aim, who desires to propagate his own eternal restlesness unto us, than thus to commute our tasks, exchange these *pleasant and gainful ones*, which God assigns us, for those *uneasie* and *fruitless*, we impose on our selves? 'Tis true, we find too many of those unprofitable works of darkness to busie and employ us: But I think no one, nay, I am apt to say, not all others together have proved so effectual to his purpose, as this of raising and maintaining *Parties in Religion*. 'Tis too usual a policy of states to secure themselves from the *fear* of a potent neighbour, by fomenting a civil *discord* in his kingdom: *Satan* has in this instance found it a lucky stratagem, it having proved the most powerful revulsive of his danger. I will not examine, whether he borrowed it from, or lent it to our *Machiavilians*, but sure he may from his own experience recommend it with the attestation of a *Probatum est*.

Our disputes in Religion divert us from minding the great businesses of our Souls.

18. Indeed this art of diversion gives him a full security against all he fears in our Christianity, for 'tis not the title he envies to us, or dreads himself; we know he long since had courage to contemn the name even of Christ, when invoked by those, whose practices joyn'd with him in defying it; while we are but *Jewish Exorcists*, make no other use of Christ, but to get us a reputation and a trade, he can deal well enough with us. *Seven sons of Sceva* are not half so terrible to him, as *one* St. *Paul*; 'tis him only he fears, that to the *form* has joyn'd *the power of Godliness*; that *Exorcism* he knows he cannot resist, and therefore has very dexterously found a way to divert it, by engaging us in those contentions, which allow us not to think of the practical part of our profession: By the *confus'd noise* of battle quite drowning that *voice behind us*, which says, *This is the way, walk in it*. Nay, by this subtlety he does not only divert, but forestal also; like the *Philistines*, allows no spear or sword that may be us'd *against him*, but takes up all those instruments, by which we should work the *work of God*. We know to all affairs of importance there are three necessary *concurrents*, without which they can never be dispatcht; *time*, *industry*, and *faculties*; and the more weighty and difficult the business is, the greater degree of each of these is requisite. Now certainly the *interest* of our souls is not the slightest *concern* we have: The avoiding eternal *misery*, the acquiring endless *bliss* is not so trivial, or so easie a matter as to be the work of a *moment*, the purchase of some few *yawning wishes*, or *volatile fancies*: He, who is to dispense the rewards, has propos'd us other conditions, assign'd us work, which takes up no less *time* than that of our *whole lives*, no less *intention* than of our *whole powers*: And then, if we suffer any thing else to interpose, and defaulk what is thus entirely requisite; if we cut new *channels* for that, which should run in this *one full current*, 'tis easie to divine what the event will be. For man being finite both in his nature and operations, the time and attention he bestows on one thing, must necessarily be substracted from another: And therefore, if our disputes about Religion entertain and busie us, they must unavoidably interrupt our attendance on practick duties; and so whilst we quarrel with *one another*, give our great *Master* too just ground of quarrel with *us all*, by neglecting the great, and indeed only business entrusted to us.

Our disputes rob us of too much of our precious time.

19. Now indeed that our contentions do thus divert us, is too apparent to any that shall consider it in any of the three forementioned particulars; for, first for our *time*, they do not only insensibly steal away much of it (a modesty, which most other diversions do still retain) but *magisterially* exact it, and accordingly have large parcels of it solemnly, and avowedly devoted to them; the *scanning old questions*, and *raising new ones*, having been the profest business of many mens lives; their very vocation and trade, wherein they have arrived to such *eminence*, as shews, they made *liberal oblations* of their time to it: And of this every age has left so many records, as the mere reading them would allow few vacant minutes to the succeeding: And had not time a little reveng'd his own quarrel, and consum'd many of those *writings*, by which himself was wasted, the *Hyperbole* would not be very extravagant in this case,

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which we find warrantably us'd in another, *John* 21. that even *the world it self could not contain the books which have been written.* As it is, there are more than enough to employ, nay, devour time; for when men once launch into the vast *sea* of controversie, they are tossed there endlesly, and seldom recover a *harbour*, difficulties like *waves* crouding one upon the neck of another; and accordingly we see in *polemick disputes*, how every rejoynder swells bigger and bigger, till like the Prophet's *cloud*, from a *hand breadth* it over spread the *Heavens*; every little manual becomes the parent of vast Volumes; and unless the evil cure it self by majoration; unless the greatness of the task bring in despair to supplant curiosity, and keep men from reading, the *spectators* will have as little respit as the *Combatants*; both writers and readers will be so engrost, that they will have little leisure for any thing else. And I dare in this appeal to any that have engag'd deep either way, whether they have not found it experimentally true: I wish they would but snatch some broken parcel as a plank from the common *shipwreck* of their time; rescue a few minutes for a sober reflection, and audit what real profit accrues to them from the expence of so many precious hours; how much it advances that grand business, for which their time *here* was allotted, and according to which their eternity *hereafter* will be awarded; always remembring, that if it promote it not, it hinders it, by diverting that *time* which should have *been* so employed: And indeed there cannot be a more comprehensive *mischief* than this of the *loss of time*, it being that which virtually contains the frustrating of all other advantages, whereby we should work out our Salvation. The operations even of *Christ* himself were, he tells us, limited to a certain season: *I must work the work of my Father, whilst it is day, the night cometh when no man can work*; and if the night overtake us, it matters not how we are stored with instruments of action, since they all at once then become useless. Our laws anciently set a greater *penalty* upon the stealing *beasts of breed*, than on other cattle of the same *species*, as calculating the damage by the possibilities of which the owner was robb'd. Time is the *universal womb* of things and actions; and therefore when we lose that, we suffer an accumulative prejudice, forfeit our *rights in reversion*, as well as our *possessions*, our *capacities*, as well as *enjoyments*. As in an abortion, the unhappy mother, besides the frustration of her hopes, and child-birth pains sustain'd, acquires an aptitude to miscarry for the future, and never to be able to bring forth a vital birth: And thus, God knows, multitudes of *Embryon* purposes perish, and the misery of it is, they are our best that do so. We generally pursue our *frivolous projects* with an *active vigour*, but keep our great and concerning *affairs* only in design, till *death* come and surprize us, which like the *fatal Metamorphoses* the Poets talk of, fixes us in the posture it finds us, and so presents us to *judgment*. Now I would know of the most eager contender, whether he would not chuse then to be found with his hands stretcht out in prayer to God, or *alms* to the poor, rather than dealing *blows* amongst his fellow-servants? if he would, certainly 'tis his concern to put himself into that form he would then appear in, to husband his little span of time so, as may stand him in stead, when time shall be no more.

20. But if men will needs be *improvident*, yet why will they be *ridiculous* too? If they will barter away their time, methinks they should at least have some ease in exchange; but to be industrious ill husbands, to lose all their *advantages*, and none of their *toil*, is such a solemn piece of folly, as is at once matter of scorn and wonder; yet this is the very case here; our *wranglings* do not only exhaust our *time*, but our *strength* too: We pursue them with so vehement an intention, as if our faith propos'd not to us any other victory, but over this sort of Opponents; we run our selves breathless in this *race*, where the *prize* is only a few *fading leaves*, or what is more transitory, a little *popular applause*; and make not towards the incorruptible Crown, till we are grown too feeble and decrepit for the other pursuit. Men macerate their bodies, and waste their spirits in *polemick studies*, prescribe themselves no time of discharge from that *war*, till they are able no longer to weild their *weapons*, and then, when mere impotence makes them *peaceable*, begin to cry out of *contention*, snatch up *devotion*, when controversie begins to be too heavy for them, and at their death *pray for the peace* of the Church, which they have made it the business of their life to *disturb*. This as it sufficiently attests what mens thoughts are in their cool blood, what apprehensions they have of the way when they draw near their journey's end; so does it abundantly evince the unspeakable prejudice piety receives from our Disputes; those have the active and vigorous *abettors*, while that is turn'd off to languishing *bed-rid votaries*. So that the *division* between these two, is like that of the *cattle* between *Jacob* and *Laban*, all the stronger to the one, and feebler to the other: Would God

And misspend most of our strength and industry.

God the scene were not in one respect chang'd, and that the *Syrian* had not here got the better share. But in the mean time what greater advantage can *Satan* wish for, our strength and industry is diverted upon these foreign expeditions, and *Sion* is left to be guarded by the lame and the blind, such only as are not able to follow the camp; and then 'tis not strange to see what successful assaults he has made, that that true *practick virtue*, which once made such victorious sallies on the Heathen world, is now baffled in its own quarters, beaten from its works, and driven to seek shelter in obscure corners, immures it self in some few private breasts, and so like an exil'd Prince, makes only shift to *live*, when it should *reign*. But alas! shall we for ever suffer our selves to be thus befool'd, shall this, his stale stratagem, after so many hundred years use, nay, and detection too, lose nothing of its efficacy? Must we always waste our strength in forging shackles for our selves? This is such an infatuation, as *Hosea* speaks of, *Chap.* 9. 7. *The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad.* Would God, we would once put our selves under the discipline of serious recollection, it might perhaps cure the phrensie: Let him, who has with unwearied diligence watch'd all advantage against his *antagonist*; rack'd and tortur'd every period of his discourse, to make it confess an absurdity: Let him, I say, consider how much better that *industry* had been employ'd in discovering the *fallacies* of our common adversary, that old sophister, who puts the most *abusive Elenchs* on us, whilst we are most busie in putting them one upon another. Good God! how might true vital Christianity at this day have flourish'd, if we would have bestowed our pains the right way? At how much a cheaper rate might we have *cherisht*, than we *destroy* her? All parties pretend to be very careful of this *vine*, are very busie in setting traps for the *little foxes*, all whom they are pleased to call *Hereticks*; and in the mean time take no care of the *wild boar*, let that not only spoil *her branches*, but stock up her *roots*, suffer the most savage bestial vices to destroy both power and form of godliness together. Thus unhappily do we divert our intentions from our most important concerns. And as *Archimedes* is said to have been so vehemently intent upon a *geometrical figure*, that he heard not of the taking of the city, till an *enemy* gave him his *information* and *death* together: So do we so busie our selves in drawing our several *schemes* of Religion (every of which will pretend to no less than *Demonstration*) that in the mean time that, which alone is *true Religion*, is expos'd to the fury of the enemy, sack'd, ruinated, and like the plough'd up *Jewish Sanctuary*, not one stone left upon another. Certainly most of the *questions*, which at this day disturb Christendom, have, *in respect of their matter*, no propriety toward the propagating *good life*, but, *in reference to their way of managery*, all aptness to hinder it; how much were it then for our *ease* as well as *profit*, to turn us into the plain road, where none of these thorny difficulties will encumber us? Alas! why should the *Romanist* so sweat to maintain his *purgatory flame*, as if he already felt its heat, and would in this world antedate those pains, when the same industry, bestowed here to *purifie himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, would substract the matter of that *fire*, and leave little for that *furnace* to refine? which were doubtless a much securer way, even according to his *own principles*, than to trust to the uncertain devotion of *others*, to fetch him out, when once deeply ingulph'd: 'Tis surely much better to starve that fire by one's own *innocence*, than to leave it to be extinguish'd by the tears and piety of *surviving friends*. Why should the *Socinian* so eagerly contend for the possibility of keeping the law, when *one example* would convince more than a *thousand arguments*? Let him bend his study to make himself an instance of his own doctrine; and then, though he do finally fail in proving his *Hypothesis*, yet if he do his utmost, he will not fail of a better *triumph* than that which the schools can give; and so will even from his error extract advantage, his very *straying* will by a happy *Antiperistasis* lead him into the *way*. Why does the *Predestinarian* so adventurously climb into Heaven, to ransack the celestial *Archives*, read God's *hidden decrees*, when with less labour he may secure an *authentick transcript* within himself? Let him according to St. *Peter*'s advice, *add to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance*, &c. and that chain of virtues will stand him in much more stead, than if he could as infallibly (as some have confidently) demonstrate every link of *Predestination*: 'Tis the assiduous *practice* of duty will make his calling and election sure; and unless he can confute that divine *axiom*, that *without holiness none shall see the Lord*; he cannot but confess, he may more profitably busie his thoughts in labouring to become holy, than in disputing, whether he can chuse to be so or not. Or lastly, why do we *Christians of several persuasions*, so fiercely argue against the *salvability* of each other, as if it were not only our opinion, but our interest and our wish, *that all should be damn'd, but those of our particular Sect*; when God knows, not only every society, but every single person has enough to do to *work out his own*

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salvation, which if we will take the *Apostle's* word, is to be done *with fear and trembling*, Phil. 2. 12. A temper very widely distant from that of censuring and judging. And sure we should not think that *malefactor* more meriting, or more likely to be acquitted, who should leap from the *bar* to the *bench*, and there condemn the whole goal but himself. 'Twas a sober and Christian *reply* of a late learned gentleman, who being ask'd by one, whether a *Papist* might be saved, answered, *You may be saved without knowing that.* And would we confine our cares and enquiries to those things which concern that one great interest, we might take *less pains*, and yet do *more work*; be less *busie bodies*, but more *fruitful Christians*; and then sure 'tis time we ask our selves the *Wise man*'s question, *Eccles.* 5. 16. *What profit hath he that laboureth for the wind?* and at last give over this unthriving diligence, and not so emulate the most stupid of beasts, as to make our selves burthens, only that we may couch under them.

and misemploy the great parts and abilities of the more knowing and learned

21. And were this only *Issachar*'s lot, 'twere the less to be regretted, but also *Zabulon* herein invades his portion; 'tis they that handle the *pen of the writer*, that have engrost *this error*, and will not suffer it to be a *Plebeian* one. None do so much this way mis-employ the two vulgar talents of time and industry, as those who have a third superadded to them, that of extraordinary faculties and endowments, which they do as prodigally lavish as either of the former. The beginners or abettors of *contentions* have generally been persons of the most *acute refin'd wits*, and *excellent learning*, which has enabled them for those quirks and subtilties, of which grosser understandings would have remain'd more happily ignorant. A strange production, that the greatest *beauties* of nature and art, should engender the *foulest deformity* in religion! Thus alas! have *Satan*'s altars the pre-emption of God's, the fattest oblation brought to feed the fire of *contention*, whilst that of *devotion* expires for want of nourishment. It was indeed no wonder, that the blind zeal of *Pagans* had made him so wantonly nice, that none but the choicest victims would serve his turn, none but an *Andromeda*, and an *Iphigenia*, royal and virgin sacrifices, propitiate his infernal deities: But that among Christians he should still have the same *election*, have the richest treasures of those who say they war against him, laid at his feet, have his choicest weapons out of his enemies magazine, is a riddle that can scarce be solved, but by concluding *idolatry* has only chang'd its *form*, and that he sits as securely enshrin'd in *mens passions* and animosities, as ever he did in an *idol temple*; so that he seems rather to have lost the *pomp*, than the *power* of regimen. But admit that he were not herein so immediately God's rival, that these *speculative debates* had none of those adherencies, which do so directly gratifie him, yet still he is secur'd of gaining somewhat at rebound; for alas! when mens faculties are thus employed, what weapons are there left for the defence of true *practick virtue?* and God knows, she needs them but too much. Mens *lusts* are grown subtle disputants, so that the most improved *reason* may find work enough to manage the contest; and surely would men of parts timely have bent their endeavours this way, vice could not have got so strong a party. Men are ashamed to be *proselytes* to a weak arguer, as thinking they must part with their *reputation*, as well as their *sin*: And certainly nothing is a more general *discouragement* from piety, than the *opinion of its votaries* not being persons of parts, and exalted understandings; a prejudice as old as the time of our *Saviour*, as may appear from *John* 7. Would God our greatest *Rabbies* would sadly consider how much they have contributed to this scandal, while by laying out their parts on *polemick niceties*, they have neglected the more weighty part of their business, and given too much attestation to that scandalous maxim, that *ignorance is the mother of devotion.* Certainly this is quite to mistake their *commission*, which is not that of a *herald*, to proclaim war amongst men, but that of an *embassador*, to reconcile them first to holiness, and by it to God: And doubtless one soul gain'd to piety, would more promote their account, than *many thousands* secured to a sect or party. We find how sad the doom was of that servant who wrapt up his talent, but we have no cause to think it would have been at all easier, if he had melted the talent into bullets, to maintain the skirmish with his fellows. Whether that be not the case of some who have received not the *one* talent, but the *five*, I leave it to be discussed between God and their own consciences; but in the interim, 'tis sad to see how unhappily men engage their endeavours, which seems to represent the reverse of *Isaiah's prophecy*, we have beat our plough-shares into swords, and our pruning-hooks into spears, all the instruments of fertility and growth in grace, into engines of *war* and *discord*; and then it must needs be a most deplorable condition, to which Christianity is reduced; which seems in this to be under the same calamity, which her distrest professors suffer from the *Turkish*

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tyranny, whilst her hopefullest and most pregnant children are like *janizaries* and *timariots*, train'd up to fight against her. And let none wonder that I call it fighting against her, when yet perhaps none of them do formally renounce her, for that circumstance only determines the war to be *intestine*, not *foreign*; and if our own sad experiences had not too much qualified us to judge, I might appeal to the universal vote of mankind, which of those were the most destructive. Indeed were there no other act of hostility discernable, but that which we have hitherto insisted on, the intercepting her supplies, the cutting off from her that time, industry and gifts, whereby she would be nourisht and supported, that were irreparably injurious to her, and consequently most grateful to that grand *enemy*, who, as hath been shew'd, makes advantage of our wranglings, or dissentions *with one another*, to reak his more inveterate malice *on us all*.

Chap. X.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes, as they supplant Charity.

Our Disputes are a great obstruction and hindrance to our Charity.

1. BUT alas! the miscief of these debates can never be describ'd by bare *negatives*, there are multitudes of *positive ills*, that inseparably adhere to them, and those of so destructive a force, that if Christianity were *beleaguered* and *famisht* by the former, she is *storm'd* and *batter'd* by these, and so is ascertain'd to sink under all the methods of ruin. In the front of these we may well rank those displicencies and animosities which are the product of our speculative differences, and which do indeed so naturally result from them, that 'tis not to be hoped so long as the *one* continues, that the *other* will ever cease. For though in *practice* we often see a bewitching sin dethrone the reason, and make men act as if they had no such superior principle to guide them, yet in matters of *speculation* their *affections* are generally strongly influenc'd by their *understandings*. We do not only approve, but love those notions wherewith we are prepossest, which kindness as it propagates it self to the *abettors* of the same tenets, so also it insinuates dislikes to the *opposers*. And as that opposition advances, so the disgust does too, till at last the scene shifts, and the *persons* are at a greater war than the *opinions*. But we need not thus derive a proof from the *causes*, when the thing does too demonstrably attest it self by the *effects*; for what issues are there of the mortallest hatred, which do not plentifully flow from this fountain? *Humane nature*, we know, has but three ways of actuating its passions; by *thought*, by *word*, and by *deeds*; and we may surely conclude the feud very bitter, that employs all these engines, as 'tis too visible this does; for though the *former* of these be in its own nature inscrutable to all but Omniscience, yet the *two latter* are according to *Christ's* own rule, of the *tree by its fruits*, infallible *criterions* of them; and those make such liberal discoveries, that I think I may appeal to any who have espous'd a *party*, whether they have not with the first discriminating rudiments of their own sect, imbib'd a secret *confus'd prejudice* to all others. Nay, I fear there are but few of so mortified passions, as to have stopt there, and not advanc'd to a direct aversion, and alienation of mind. Indeed were it not for this, 'twere scarce possible for so many of the *vulgar* to be such *bigots* in their several factions; for alas! their intellects are generally too *gross* to have any *clear* apprehension of the points they contend for; their leaders only give them some *general confus'd notions*, just enough to excite their *displeasure* against all dissenters, and then their *anger* must presently be call'd *zeal*, and instead of the more uneasie task of suppressing their passion, this expedient serves at once to hallow and gratifie it: Nay, so ridiculous have some mens prepossessions of this kind been, that they would scarce allow those to be *entire men*, whom they thought not *sound believers*, but have fancied I know not what *bodily*, as well as *mental* monstrosities in those they were pleas'd to call *hereticks*; a piece of childish credulity, which the emissaries of some factions have not disdain'd to make their advantage of. But these inward disgusts and rancours are but the first bound of this ball of contention, when this *leaven* is once in the *heart*, it will quickly diffuse it self, and both *tongue* and *hands* will be tainted with it. Hence comes it, that disputes in religion are managed with such virulency and bitterness, that one would think the disputants had put off much of *humanity*, before they come thus to treat of *divinity*. The *government of the tongue*

is a piece of morality which sober nature dictates, which yet in this instance many even of our greatest scholars seem totally to have unlearnt; for whether we consider the unseemly reproaches, or rigid censures, wherewith almost all parties pursue their antagonists, we have reason to say with St. *James*, *The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poyson:* Would God their *guilt* of this kind did not so loudly proclaim it self, as to supersede the need of *proof*. 'Tis too obvious that the *satyr* has usurpt the chair, and *polemick discourses* are degenerated into *libels* and *invectives*; our controvertists fall from *arguments* to *reproaches*, as if their zeal lay more to blast their adversary's *fame*, than confute his *error*; and were this only in personal extemporary debates, it might have the excuse of an indeliberate passion. Indeed it were to be wisht, that all words of this sort might vanish in that breath that utters them; that as they resemble the wind in *fury* and *impetuousness*, so they might do also in *transientness*, and *sudden expiration:* But alas! a course is taken to immortalize them, they become *records*, and our most elaborate *controversial writings*, like the earth after the curse, over-run with these briers and thorns, sarcasms, contumelies and invectives filling so many *pages*, that were those weeded out, many *volumes* would be reduced to a more *moderate bulk*, as well as *temper*. Nor are our *censures* any thing more modest than our *reproaches*, every petty difference is mutually upbraided to each party as a defection from the faith, so that we scarce know a milder *name* than heresie, nor *doom*, than damnation. And as if the visible obliquities or errors would not afford us indictments enough against one another, there is a closer inspection made, every *position* is ript up, and curiously dissected, to see what *embryo* is in its womb, what seeds there are of monstrous productions, which though perhaps the native strength of the principle would never have *animated*, yet the preternatural heat of an antagonist can quickly *hatch* them (like the *chickens* at *Grand Cairo*) into life, and vigorous being: And if by a long chain of (perhaps fallacious) inferences, some such imputation is fastned upon a *Thesis*, then all who embrace that, are charg'd also with all this *spurious brood*, though they never so solemnly renounce and disclaim them. A practice sure very uncharitable; for suppose such *consequences* never so regularly deduced from my *opinion*, yet so long as I seriously disavow and detest them, I may indeed be thought *unwise* in not discerning the connexion, but sure not *impious*. So that unless want of *Logick* be a *damning sin*, no man can hence be authoriz'd to pronounce me *reprobate:* And I cannot think that God, whose rigor bends against the faults of our *wills*, rather than our *understandings*, and who at the last great assize will assume our own consciences into the judicature upon us, will ever sentence me for those *deductions*, how horrid soever, which I never made mine, or that I shall ever find my self in Hell for a *mispersuasion*, which I never entertain'd. But there are some whose censures are not so *artificial*, yet no less *severe*, who beg their *postulata*, and taking it for granted that such and such are the only sanctified opinions, make them the *Shiboleth* by which to discriminate not only their own friends, but God's too, lock up Heaven gates against any who bring not that ticket for admittance; and though they make the way wide enough to receive the most *over-grown sinner* of their own opinion, yet they pronounce it impossible to the *strictest piety* of a dissenter. And upon such grounds as these do we mutually doom one another to perdition, never considering, that whilst we so briskly presage *others* damnation, we really prepare for our *own*. Alas! our eagerness to *heat the furnace seven times hotter for all that bow not to our dictates*, does but expose us to the fate of *Nebuchadnezzar's officers*, Dan. 3. to be our selves consumed in that flame wherein we cast them. 'Tis indeed to be wisht we would cease to invade God's peculiar, by judging those that must stand or fall to him: But if we will needs take his *office*, 'tis but equitable we take his *rules* too: and in our *wrath* remember *mercy*. But God be blessed, 'tis the judgment of our *upright*, yet *gracious* Master, that shall finally determine us; and not that of our passionate fellow-servants: If these were irreversible, and the key of the bottomless pit were in our *custody*, we might give Satan *a writ of ease*, discharge him from his perambulations, he would need no more to walk about as a *lion*, but might still lie in his *den*, and we should bring in *prey* enough to glut the devourer. For could we *execute* all we *condemn*, we might ask the Disciples question, *Matth.* 19. 25. *Who then can be saved?* But as these severe *censures* are a present *violation of charity*, so they tend to the perpetuating it, by obstructing a return to that *unity of judgment*, which might make up the very *original breach*; for while men reciprocally load each others opinions and persons with detestable imputations, if they really speak what they think, they do still more deeply impress upon themselves the prejudice to that which they accuse (*hatred* as well as *love* gathering strength by being actuated) but if they do indeed

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not believe their own *charge*, yet having once made it, either upon interest or passion, 'tis not probable they will want *pride* to maintain it; and when we consider how ruling a *piece of carnality* that is, we cannot wonder if it indispose men to *retractations*. I wish we had not too many, and too late instances of some, whose weightiest *objection* against a cause has been their own former *violence* against it. When men have once fastned the brand of heresie, profaneness, or blasphemy upon an *opinion*, they think they cannot afterwards become its *proselytes*, without either seeming to *assume* those guilts, or at least that of having *falsly charg'd* them upon others: And the horns of such a *dilemma* do so gore their *reputation*, that it often tempts to salve that with the *wounding of conscience*, and persuades them rather to reject their *convictions*, than expose their *credits*. And certainly were this the only ill consequent of our rigorous accusations, it would be enough to prejudice them as unfit instruments in a Gospel-design; but though they suit not with that work to which they solemnly *pretend*, they are most accommodate to that they really produce: For if we examine in the third place, what *influence* these our eager contests have upon our *actions*, we shall find them fully proportionable to our *words*. And first negatively, 'tis apparent in too many, that they are apt to confine even the common offices of humanity to their own sect: And others who do not so, yet shew so great partiality in dispensing them, as discovers the name of *Christian* is not half so charming, as that of their own *particular faction*. Were instances of this kind as *needful* as they are *numerous*, 'twere easie to give multitudes: But I think none that has liv'd in our late confusions, can have wanted occasions of observing it in *others*, at least, if not in himself. But alas! *omissions* are scarce worth our notice, when there are so many *positive acts* of unkindness so visible among us: They know little of *ancient*, and less of *modern* times, that are unacquainted with the *mutual persecutions*, which almost all parties have alternately rais'd one against another among Christians: *Confiscations* and *banishments*, *gibbets* and *flames*; weapons, God knows, much too carnal for a spiritual warfare, yet much more in use than those St. *Paul* recommends to *Timothy*, *gentleness*, and *meek instructing of opposers*, 2 Tim. 2. 25, 26. And when 'tis consider'd that those opposers too were Heathens, 'twill be more than a little strange, that severity should be allowable to *brethren*, which was interdicted against *aliens*. Is it an easier crime to reject the *entire body* of that faith which was once deliver'd to the Saints, than to differ in the explication of some *one branch* of it? Nay, perhaps only of some *corollary* and *deduction* from it, which as far as it is humane, may be fallible, and therefore can no more command my *assent*, than it satisfies my *judgment*; yet this is generally the most that can be affirmed of our differences; for almost what party is there, which doth not avowedly own all that *faith* which constituted the first *Christians?* would God we did as uniformly embrace the charity too; and then most of our disputes would be superseded, at least so calm'd, that there should be none of those destructive effects which they now produce. For alas! how many funeral piles has this preposterous zeal kindled! so that what some said of *Draco*'s laws, may too justly be applied to our arguments, that they have been writ rather in *blood*, than *ink*. But as Christ, when he forewarn'd his Disciples of the ensuing persecution, tells them, not only they shall be kill'd, but they shall be put out of the Synagogue: So now, as if Christians were emulous of every branch of *Jewish* cruelty, we transcribe that part of the copy too, and either by causless excommunicating *others*, or separating our *selves*, we deny the benefit of *publick communion* to each other: And this is a greater severity than the former, by how much more implacable our hate is against what we count *error*, than what we know to be *vice*; and by how much the concerns of the *soul* are more estimable than those of the *body*. The inveterateness of those feuds, which rise from opinion, may clearly be discovered in this instance. Let a man have committed all the *outrages*, which may render him unworthy to live, yet when we prosecute him to *death*, we willingly afford him all helps towards his *future state*, and no man is so inhumane as to refuse to pray, either *for*, or *with* a malefactor; yet some few *speculative differences* are such a gulph betwixt us, that we cannot meet even in that we all acknowledge our common duty, *The worship of our God*. Certainly among all the accursed issues of our *contention*, there is none more malignant and criminal, than this of *schism* and *separation*; and would men judge dispassionately, more irrational too: For doubtless were our case stated to any sober Heathen, he would never be able to guess, why they who equally acknowledge the advantage and necessity of *prayer*, confess the same God, have the same common wants in this world, and hopes in the next, may not ask in the same *form*, and in the same *place*. Alas! is it not enough to be at distance where we *differ*, but must we be so also where we *agree?* Is unity so dreadful to us, that we must act contradictions to

escape it? Surely this is a *stranger fascination* of the spirit of division, than that in the Gospel *Demoniack*, which enabled him to break all bonds in sunder, and like it, abhors the approaches of a *Saviour*, crying out, *What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus the Son of God, art thou come to torment us?* Who knows what a powerful exorcism, the united intercessions of the Christian world might have been? had we joyntly deprecated quarrels, God might have found a way to have compos'd them, though we could not; and our *tears* might have cemented those breaches, which our *dissents* made, but our *separation* widens. I know the venerable names of the sanctions of *holy Church*, the hundred thirty seventh Canon of the Code of the universal Church, which says in express terms, Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ αἱρετικοῖς ἢ σχισματικοῖς συνεύχεσθαι, *that we ought not to pray with Hereticks or Schismaticks*, and very many warm expressions of the *fathers* are producible in this case: But till we excommunicate with the tears and sorrows, and publick concernment of the primitive Christians, who refus'd all acts of kindness only out of love, and the most ardent Charity, we may by no means lay claim to their pattern; whose estrangements only flow from malice and inveterate hate. Would we indeed comport with the example of those happy times, we should have fear'd the *guilt of Schism* in our selves so much, as not to have lightly charged it upon others; we should have prayed for the *conversion* of Dissenters, not laid *Anathema's* upon them, and prayed for their *confusion*. St. *Paul*, we see, *Heb.* 10. 25. reckons the *forsaking of assemblies* as a degree, at least preparative, of *apostasie*; and from his time throughout all the purer ages of the Church, the holy Fathers have generally branded it as the highest impiety; and no marvel, for it is one of those gyant like sins, which not only oppresses *men*, but invades even *God himself*. 'Tis the mangling and assassinating *that body*, to which Christ owns an *inseparable connexion*; the putting him to head scatter'd limbs, instead of an entire compact body, as if we meant to refute St. *Paul*, shew him 'tis possible that *Christ may be divided*. Good God! what shall we say, when we see Heathen soldiers estimate Christ's *coat* higher than Christians do his *body*? they thought the *one* too good to be parted, but we cease not to tear and mangle the *other*, and which is yet more monstrous, make it *a part of our Religion* to do so. We name our *opinions* our *faith*, and when under that title we have enshrin'd them, we make more barbarous immolations than ever the most *savage Heathens* did. They sacrificed some few objects of their love, their *children*, but we sacrifice the very *affection*, and think our zeal *lukewarm*, till it have reduced our Charity to *ashes*. And now if we compare these our *divisions*, *wrath* and *bitterness*, with those fundamental Gospel precepts of *unity*, *love* and *meekness*, we must surely say, we have not there so learn'd Christ. And then how ridiculous is it, to pretend a zeal to that Gospel, whose very foundations we undermine? Peace is at once the *blessing* and *duty* of Christians, and those heats of *speculative* contests which violate it, will certainly never serve to make us either good or happy. And therefore till charity cease to be an essential part of Christianity (which certainly, we must burn our Bibles e'er we can suppose) we must conclude, that our disputes, and the ways whereby we manage them, how much soever they pretend to preserve, do indeed evacuate and destroy true, that is, *practick Christianity*.

CHAP. XI.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes, as they engage upon ill Arts and scandalous Practices, to sustain the espoused Cause and Party.

Peoples zeal puts them upon ill practices to promote their opinions:

1. AND yet so unhappily are many men mistaken, that these *irregular heats*, which thus waste the vital spirits of Religion, are thought the most *sovereign Cordials* to support them. The highest *Paroxysm* of this fever is deem'd the perfectest *health*. Men esteem the overflowing of their *gall*, the exuberance of their *zeal*; and then all the promises to the *faithful combatant* in Christ's camp, they confidently appropriate to that their so eminent *Grace*; though indeed it can with no more propriety be call'd so, than *Pharaoh's lean Kine* might be said to be *fat*, because they had devour'd those that were so. In plain terms, men lay so great weight upon their being of right opinions, and their eagerness of abetting them, that they account *that* the *unum necessarium*, and think the propagating of those so *important a service* to God, as

will justifie the use of the most *interdicted instruments*, legitimate the most *enormous commissions*, that they can fancy contributive to that pious end: And moreover commute for the neglect of *practick Duties*, in the general tract of their *lives*. I shall not here urge the hazard of mens erring in the choice of opinions, nay, the certainty that of many opposite, one only can be the right; and then to all such as miss that, their very ground-work fails them. I shall only confine my self to the *malignant influence* this persuasion has on *practice*, and in that respect, I cannot but affirm it a most *pernicious delusion*, which, as it tends extremely to the enhansing the bitterness of our contests, so it may justly be reckoned among the worst effects of them, and is a most *irrefragable proof*, how much they obstruct the vital *efficacy of Religion* in our hearts. Nor is it any new thing for men thus to deceive themselves; for we find such confidences as these frequently upbraided to the *Jews*, both by the *Prophets* and *Christ* himself; they thought their *zeal* to the Temple, and ritual observances so invincibly meritorious, as no *crime* could defeat, and that their *legal purifications* would render them acceptable in God's eyes, in spight of all their *moral Pollutions*: But how fallacious a hope this was, the many severe increpations of God do sufficiently attest. Yet certainly their guilt was far below ours, the things they so depended on were *parts*, though not the *whole* of their Duty; those *ordinances*, though perhaps somewhat *adulterated* by *rabbinical* mixtures, yet for the main were *instituted* by God himself, and that with a design of discriminating and separating them from the rest of the world; and such peculiarities and privileges as these might have an aptness to excite that presumption: But alas! the case is otherwise with most of us; they are not the *Revelations* of God's Will, not the *Testament* of our dying Redeemer, but some *codicils* and *annexes* of our own we so earnestly abet. 'Tis not the *Text* (for then 'twere impossible for any that receiv'd the same Canon of Scripture to differ) but our *glosses* to which we pay such reverence; and when on that account, we *sever* our selves from those, to whom the commands of God, the blood of our Saviour have most closely *united* and *cemented* us, we can yet make a shift to think that there is so much of sacred in this, as shall not only render it highly rewardable, but also hallow all other profanations of our lives; and in our *Jehu* march upon such an expedition, can turn all regrets of conscience (like *Joram's* messengers) behind us. That this is so none can doubt, who observe with what boldness men rush upon the most *unchristian sins*, in pursuit of what thy fancy a *Christian cause*. Were it not for this *amulet*, how were it possible for any to think they may venture upon perjury, sacrilege, murder, regicide, any thing without impeachment to their *Saintship*; nay, to think that the only danger lies on the other side, in being *remissly wicked*, that to *slack* any thing of the utmost speed, is *to do the work of the Lord negligently*. Yet, that this has been a prevailing persuasion, we have had too many, and too sad instances; and God grant we may not find them so repeated, that our *sense* may supersede the *use* of our memories concerning them; nor has this been peculiar to one only Sect, but those, who are otherwise at the widest distance, unite in this principle. They are not only *Fanaticks*, that can say *grace* over the foulest *crimes*, and consecrate them to the use of a *good cause*; if we examine the *Dypticks*, either of conclave or consistory, we shall find some Saints upon that account, who could never have been so upon any other. And when we consider how often *Heaven* has been mortgaged to gain auxiliaries from *Hell*, how men have been encouraged to the most *damning sins*, by *promises* of being certainly saved; we must either think that a *holy Cause* is omnipotent enough to reverse *God's Decrees*, to save whom he would *damn*, or else that this pretence is one of the most ruinous deceits, the most fatal treachery to souls that ever *Satan* contriv'd, who, though he do in all instances play the *Mountebank*, yet sure never more than when on confidence of this *antidote*, he persuades thus to swallow down his *deadliest poyson*.

2. Upon defamation of mens persons, and perverting their writings:

2. I must not here attempt to enumerate all the *unchristian practices*, that have on this score been made, not only *lawful*, but *meritorious*; yet there is one of so frequent use, that I must needs advert unto it, and that is, those *calumnies* and *falshoods*, which are now become a piece of *ecclesiastick* as well as *state policy*, and a great part of that offensive armour, wherewith our controvertists assault one another. Indeed, if we consider how many *forges* are daily going for these *engines*, we shall have reason to think all parties have an high esteem of their *usefulness*. Of these calumnies there are too many sorts and degrees to be here particulariz'd: And indeed, those, who permit themselves to use any, can be suppos'd to have no other *boundaries*, than the advantage of their *cause*: And accordingly as that seems to exact, they lay their *scene*; sometimes they traduce the persons of their opposers, and by raising prejudices against them, hope some of it will reflect upon their Doctrine: Did men generally know how

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to distinguish between *reports* and *certainties*, this *stratagem* would be as *unskilful*, as it is *uningenuous*. But considering the vulgar temper, it's not unaptly suited to it. This it seems was anciently understood, it being the old *Greek* advice, θαῤῥῶντας ἅπτεσθαι, ϗ δάκνειν ταῖς διαβολαῖς, ὅτι κἂν θεραπεύσῃ τὸ ἕλκος ὁ δεδηγμένος, ἡ οὐλὴ μένει τῆς διαβολῆς: *To calumniate stoutly, for, that how perfectly soever the wound of reproach be healed, there will remain a scar; and though we wipe away with never so much care the dirt thrown at us, there will be left some sulliage behind:* And accordingly this was the expedient the *Pagans* us'd against the *primitive Christians*, to put them thus in the skins of beasts, and shapes of monsters, and then worry them to death. And this is the method still, though heightned and improved; and our *Religion* has suffer'd infinitely more since we us'd it against *each other*, than when they manag'd it against the *whole community*. But besides this *defamation* of persons, another branch of this black art is the *depraving* of writings, both in the sense and very letter, and direct words; for the former of these, whosoever observes the strange perversions, and affected mistakes of mens meanings visible in many of our *polemick* discourses, will sure resolve that a man's *intentions*, as well as his *words* and *actions*, may be calumniated: Nor does the *letter* scape better, every period which threatens danger to the cause, must be mutilated and dismembred, and as *Sampson* was by the *Philistines*, lose its hair and eyes, and then be made sport for the whole party. And I fear there are too few, who do not in this case take the *Jewish* reparation, an *eye for an eye*, &c. retaliate to the adversary the foul play they receive. But some advance yet higher, and think it not enough to make an argument or testimony useless to the *enemy*, unless they draw it over to *themselves*, make it *betray* the side it was to *maintain*; and as a conqueror uses to restore arms to such of the adverse party, as will turn to his, so after they have by satisfactions secur'd themselves of its aid, it shall then be made as potent as is possible, and with such kind of *renegado troops* as these, some *causes* have been much supported. Yet were this *violation* offer'd only to the writings of living men, who might vindicate it, 'twere not so transcendently *ignoble*, but it most frequently falls upon those, who have made their beds in the dust; who have chang'd their own *form*, and cannot secure their *writings* from the same *fate*: Nay, 'tis yet more frequently *those*, whom we have all reason to suppose, and most of us profess to believe *glorified saints*; and this superadds a daring presumption to all other circumstances of the guilt, and heightens an injustice into sacrilege. It has always been held the most detestable sort of *forgery* to counterfeit *testaments*, though the *testator* were of never so low a quality, or his *bequests* of never so mean a value: And shall it now pass for a piece of *commendable dexterity*, and art of manage, to falsifie those *writings*, by which the fathers of the Church design'd to entail *truth* and *piety*, not *strife* and *faction* upon her? We know, *necromancy* has justly been reputed one of the most horrid forms of *sorcery*, because it enforced *dead* men to speak what the living were inquisitive to hear. I leave it to be consider'd, what this wants of that, besides the dreadful *ceremonies* of the incantation; certainly 'tis a guilt, which nothing but our too familiar acquaintance with it could make unformidable. And indeed, this whole method of serving a *cause* by such *sinister means*, is so utterly repugnant to the principles, even of ingenuous nature, that we can scarce cast a greater scandal upon an opinion, than to shew it needs such aids. 'Tis by *Historians* branded as an execrable fact in him, who to secure himself from a *neighbour Prince*, call'd the *Turk* into Christendom: But sure those, who to fortifie their side, have brought in this artifice of *calumniating* and *falsifying*, have done an act no less *impious*; the constitution of *Christianity* agreeing full as well with the *Alcoran* as with these *Piæ fraudes*; as some of them, who perhaps mean the *fraud* more than the *piety*, are pleas'd to call them. Nay, indeed they accord not much better with *philosophy* than *divinity*; every man knows the nature of contraries is to combate and expel, not to cherish and support one another. How absurd is it then for those, who say they design to advance *truth*, to make *falshood* their instrument? I wish they would experiment to accommodate their secular concerns at the same rate; let them *cool* them in the fire, *warm* them in the frost, and *feed* themselves by perpetual fasting, and when they find cause to commend the efficacy of that method, they may with fairer pretence in this higher instance reconcile the feuds of reason and of nature, and make a *lye* the evidence of *truth*. In the interim, it may well pass for *sophistry* as well as *sin*; and doubtless, whatever advantages are hop'd for to private sects and parties by this art, Christian religion in general is hugely prejudiced by it. For when men shall compare the veracity of Heathens with our falshoods; learn from *Historians*, that among the *Persians*, αἴσχιστον τὸ ψεύδεσθαι νενόμισται, *to lye was deem'd a fault of the greatest turpitude*, and they therefore laid an ill character upon persons in debt, ὅτι ἀνάγκη

τ᾽ ἀφιλάληθες, τὸ ψεῦδος λέγειν, *because he that is so must needs tell lyes*: And when they shall see in the laws of *Cingis*, a barbarous *Tartar*, lying made a *capital crime*, and yet among Christian *Casuists* made a *holy artifice*, they will be tempted to think our *end* as fictitious as our *way*; and that our religion has little countenance from *truth*, which is thus fain to make *lyes* its refuge. Thus unhappily do these arrows revert, not only on *those* who shoot them, but in the face of *Christianity* it self, which is defam'd, and traduced by those *slanders*, we aim at our *private adversaries*.

2. Upon evacuating the Law, and making void the precepts of the Gospel:

3. But besides this *direct*, there are other more *oblique* ways of making *vice* subservient to *religion*, or to speak more properly, of making *religion* subservient to *vice*; for some zealots of several parties, who more regard the *numerousness* than *purity* of their professors, discerning how much the sensual part of mankind startles at the strictness of Gospel-precepts, are industrious to take off that discouragement, not by convincing them of the real divine sweetness and pleasantness of them, but by debasing and accommodating them more to the carnal appetite: Yet here men proceed not all alike, some use Christ's yoke, as *Hananiah* did that of *Jeremy*, break it quite off; others only essay to slacken and alleviate it, that it may not pinch the lusts of *libertine proselytes*: Of the first sort are such, as having made the adherence to their party the infallible mark of *sanctification*, and that *sanctification* of *election*, do from thence proclaim to all who are so qualified a general jubilee and manumission from the bond, even of *Christ's* as well as *Moses's* law; or if some of them allow it to remain an impotent director, yet while they affirm, that *God sees no sin in his elect*, or if he do, beholds them as a father does the harmless falls of his child, rather with *smiles* than *anger*, they make the *violations* of it so safe, that they are too sure to be many, and between abrogating and thus enervating a law, the *difference* is merely verbal.

3. Upon slackening the severity of its Commands.

4. Of the second sort are some, who by indulgent and partial glosses, seek to mollifie the severity of Christ's commands; that contrive for their clients, not the *means* of obeying, but the *arts* of escaping them; like the *unjust steward*, teach their Lord's debtors to *write fifty instead of a hundred*, and decide cases of conscience more according to the *interests* and *passions* of men, than the *will* of Christ. There are a generation of men, of whose dexterity in this faculty the world has taken so much notice, that I need not name them, a sort of easie *Casuists*, who seem to have erected a *court of equity* to relieve men against the *rigour of divine law*; and there is little doubt but they shall find enough ready to make such *appeals*: Men love to be Christians as cheap as they can, and therefore will close with that party, which offers the easiest terms: And then while these spiritual *Pioneers* do thus enlarge the narrow way, make it a road as well for the beast as the man, the *brutish sensual*, as well as *rational divine* part of us, no wonder though sholes of converts throng in to them. But 'tis to be consider'd, that all this while this is winning Proselytes to themselves, not to God; the gaining them to a *sect*, not a *religion*; at least not to that pure religion, and undefiled, which the grand Author of our faith has both exemplified, and propos'd to us; for how much that suffers by this way of propugning private opinions, is more than enough apparent. Yet so ambitious are our prime leaders of such trophies, that in order to them, some are said to ascend yet a step higher, and besides this general encouragement they give to mens lusts by *taking off* restraints, do in some cases actually *promote* and *excite* them. For when they see a licentious person, whose *acquist* they judge beneficial to their *cause*, they have artifices of fomenting his riots, do not only take off the *bridle*, but use the *spur* also, hoping that at the rebound it may conduce to their *end*. If any think it impossible it should do so, let them consider, that among our various opinions, some there are which sell Heaven much cheaper than others dare, that allow such *easie atonements*, as the most *habitual sinner* need not despair of: And then the most infallible means to ascertain such to that side, is to make them too bad for any other. For when a man is resolute to keep his *sins* while he *lives*, and yet unwilling to relinquish all *hopes* when he *dies*, 'tis more than probable, he will embrace that profession, which bids fairest to the reconciling those so distant interests; and therefore the *greater malefactor* he is, the more sure he will be *to fly to the horns of this Altar*; the nearer sinking, the apter to catch at these reeds; so that the project is not *impolitick*, though God knows so *impious*, that 'tis much fitter for the school of *Machiavel* than of *Christ*; and seems to verifie that imputation as to a part of Christians, which *Julian* once as falsely as maliciously affixt upon the whole; *That their Church was an asylum and sanctuary for the most flagitious offenders, and protected those guilts, to which no other religion allow'd any expiation.* 'Tis indeed so horrid, that I cannot think there are many *consciences* so cauteriz'd by this fiery *zeal*, as to admit it, yet that some have done it, there is too much certainty, and there-

therefore, 'tis no improper instance in our present argument; for if mens *eagerness* to support their several sides can transport them to such *attempts* as these, 'tis abundant evidence how much Christianity loses by these contests of under factions, which, while they pretend to *guard*, do indeed *invade* her under her own colours.

5. But besides the faults men commit with this immediate *avow'd aspect* upon their religion, there are others which slily shroud themselves under the *skirt* of its *mantle*; I mean those *sins* of common life, which though they pretend not to advance the cause, yet when acted by a *zealot*, are thought to be overwhelm'd by his heroick *piety*. Indeed men who make themselves so much work about others *faith*, are seldom at leisure to regulate their own *practice*, and so have no way of stating their accounts with God, but by balancing the *excess* of the one against the *defects* of the other: How such reckonings will pass the grand audit, 'tis I think not hard to divine; but in the interim, it keeps them very chearful and secure, teaches them a receipt to retain all their *sins*, and yet lose none of their *confidence*; so that when they have immerst themselves in all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, they can trust their zeal to refine them from all that dross. Nor does it only thus reconcile them to their own vices, but to other mens also, whose most brutish sensualities they can look on with perfect patience, nay, even *atheism* it self can have *fair quarter*: They are not much discomposed to see men have *no religion*, 'tis only the having *one different* from their own that awakes their indignation; then like *Saul*, when seiz'd on by the *evil spirit*, they cast about their javelins, think no rigour too great on such a provocation; yet even here they have intervals, and the very same persons who are thus at odds upon a *religious*, can unite upon a *vicious* account. Those who mutually denounce *damnation* to each other, can with full accord combine in those *practices* which will ascertain it to them both, as if they so much fear'd to have their *predictions* defeated, that they would be each other's *convoy* to the land of darkness. Those that will by no means meet at the *Church*, know not when to part at the *tavern*, and though they will not joyntly partake of the *cup of the Lord*, are yet very sociable at the *cup of Devils*; I mean those excessive debauchees, which are a most acceptable drink-offering to those infernal spirits. Have we not seen many, whose distant opinions have fastned upon one another the brand of *antichristianism*, who have yet like *Gog* and *Magog* joyn'd against the holy city? And those who could never agree on the way of setting up *Christ's throne*, have yet been very unanimous in pulling down the *king*'s. Thus alas! do we justle one another out of the *narrow path* that leads to life, but can hand in hand run our career in the *broad way* of destruction. And doubtless this great unevenness, these spiritual feuds, and carnal endearments between the same persons; this *impetuous zeal*, and as *impetuous lusts* in the same breasts could never be, did not men depend so confidently on the *one*, as to think it will commute and satisfie for the *other*. But alas! how groundless a presumption this is, the whole tenour of the Gospel does abundantly witness. In all that grand *charter* where is there the least clause importing such an *immunity*? I am sure there are multitudes that assert the contrary. Indeed the whole frame of the evangelical covenant is totally against it; that requiring an entire uniform sanctity, and allowing no other *privilege* to the *sins* of the most knowing professors, but a *preheminence* in *punishment*, the being beaten with many *stripes*. And when 'tis consider'd that the *end* of all religion is but the drawing us to a *conformity* with God, the impressing on us some character of his eternal goodness and holiness, 'twill be as absurd as impious to believe that our *zeal* to any religion can absolve us from that *purity* which is the end and design of all. And while this is the way men take to approve their piety, 'tis no marvel to find so *many* Christians, and so *little* Christianity in the world: For that is not to be estimated by the *number* of its professors, but by their *obedience* to its rules; and he that gives up his *name* to it, and not his *heart*, will receive as little *advantage* by it, as he brings *honour* to it, and how little that is in respect of its internal efficacy, is I presume competently evidenced.

Some think that their great zeal will commute, and make amends for their private wickedness.

6. But that we may more throughly discern how universally destructive our *wranglings* are to it, in all its *concerns*, let us a little examine whether they do not endamage it, even in respect of *outward profession* also. This may seem a strange query to those who think their *disputes* about religion are to denominate them the great *confessors* of the age: Yet certainly there is but too much ground not only for the *enquiry*, but to resolve it in the *affirmative*. And if it prove so, 'twill infer but sadly to those, who having laid the whole stress of their hopes upon their zeal to advance their faith, will be found to have *pull'd down* more than they have *built up*. Now Christianity may in respect of profession decay two ways, either in its *hopes*, or in its *possession*, the one in relation to *aliens*, the other to *disciples*: The first by hindring the

Our divisions are prejudicial to the progress of the Gospel, by hindring the conversion of its enemies

the accession of *new* converts, the second by staggering or alienating the *old*; and both these ways she visibly appears to suffer by our divisions. And first, if we consult but our experience, if we trust but our own observations, we cannot but confess that the Gospel has long been at a great stand; that that *sun*, which at its first arising was like *David's*, Psal. 19. surrounded the world in a vigorous efficacious motion, is since become like *Joshua's*, Josh. 10. 12. arrested in its course; nay, like *Hezekiah's*, gone backward, *Isa.* 38. 8. *Mahumetism* (if not *Paganism*) having long taken up its seat in divers of the most flourishing apostolick plantations. A sad change, that from the daily and numerous accession of the first times, it should now become a kind of *prodigy*, a piece of *news* scarce heard in an age, that one single *proselyte* is gain'd to the *Church*; yet that thus it is, is too obvious to be denied. And truly it is not much less apparent, that our dissentions have in a great degree contributed to it. For first, as to the *extirpation* of the eastern Churches, he that shall examine the records of those times, will have cause to say, their jangling and divisions were not only in a *moral* or *divine*, but even in a *proper natural sense*, the instruments of it: The *Turk* only coming in at those breaches which themselves had made, nor had their *candlestick* probably been removed, had they not first abus'd its *light*, to the setting themselves in *combustion*. That the same *cause* has not yet had the same *effect* among us, is owing not to its *unaptness* to produce it, but to the admirable *patience* and *mercy* of God, who yet withholds that fatal judgment, which we do our parts to pull upon our selves; our mutual violences against one another herein unhappily combining, and making one united force against us all. But though the *divine goodness* hath hitherto so countermined our *treachery* to our selves, as not to suffer us to enjoy that state of darkness we have so courted, yet certainly our *contentions* are extremely accessary to the continuing it upon others, our many *new* and *wandring lights*, however they fail of having that property of the *Pillar of fire*, Exod. 14. of illuminating and conducting the *Israelites*, yet too much answer its other, in becoming *cloud* and *darkness* to the *Egyptians*; there being scarce any thing more apt to intercept the beams of the Sun of righteousness from the Heathen world, every of those *little enclosures* our factions have made in the Church, becoming a *great partition-wall* to keep others out of it. This may be made evident in several respects: As first, in relation to those many *moral obliquities* in which our eager disputes do (as hath already been shewed) betray us, which cannot but give so much *scandal* to any considering man, that we can scarce hope any can turn to us as to a better religion, but will rather think it the way to relinquish all; to obliterate those *native impressions* of piety and honesty they brought with them into the world; so that if we expect any *proselytes*, it must be only such as would live *worse* than mere *nature* allows them.

Our differences at home make us backward in propagating the Gospel abroad amongst Infidels.

7. But this, though as important a consideration as can well be, I shall not here insist on, having in the second section given some instances, how apt our *morality* is to defame our *divinity*, and confirm men in opposition to it. But though this be a great, yet 'tis not the only means by which our dissentions hinder the progress of the Gospel, for they do not only make *Infidels* less inclinable to receive it, but *us* to propagate it. Those do so busie and engross us, that there is neither leisure, nor heart left for this. Our *activest spirits* are so engaged at home in asserting their *private quarrels*, that all such *foreign designs* are forgot. For as in *civil*, so in *ecclesiastical* concerns, every one is more industrious to advance his peculiar interest, than that of the *community*, accordingly we find innumerable promulgers of every new opinion. No *sect* wants its *apostles* to propagate and diffuse it; but where are there any that have the like care for the main *root* of Christian Religion, which they have for these little *twigs* and *off-sets*, which they have planted in their own gardens? How many ages must we look back, to find a man that has made it his business to convert *Infidels* to the faith? 'Tis true indeed, there are some very magnificent relations of *modern attempts* this way, of great industry some have us'd to bring the most savage nations to the obedience of Christ: But if we examine, 'twill be obvious, the main design was to subject them to themselves: 'Twas not so much their *Heathenism*, as their *territories* they invaded, and such *apostles* as these are ill qualified to make St. *Paul's* profession, 2 *Cor.* 12. 16. *I seek not yours, but you.* And the success of such essays have been answerable to the motive; they have won *riches*, but not *souls*. The *Gospel* in one hand, and a *sword* in the other, has made many *slaves*, but I fear few *Christians*. Indeed, what encouragement had those poor creatures to receive a religion from their oppressors? Why should they think that those who tortur'd and kill'd their *bodies*, were really concern'd to save their *souls*? Or that those who would not permit them to enjoy what was their own, meant to help them to any thing better?

And while the *felicities* of another world were recommended to them only by *such*, as had deprived them of all in *this*, we cannot wonder at their *little appetite* to embrace them; or to find the opprest *Indians* protest against that *heaven*, where the *Spaniards* are to be their co-habitants. In short, this is sure such a method of *evangelizing*, as too widely differs from that which first planted the *Church*, to be likely to advance its *growth:* So that notwithstanding all pretences of this kind, we may resume our assertion, and conclude, that our *intestine discords* (perhaps not those alone) have diverted the *zeal* of this more Christian undertaking, and left a great part of the world under that invincible ignorance St. *Paul* mentions, *Rom.* 10. 14. *How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher?* and God knows whether we have not herein provided better for their excuse, than our own.

and doth prejudice them against those doctrines we cannot our selves agree upon,

8. There is yet another way by which our *divisions* impede their *conversion*, and that is, by giving them *prejudice* to that doctrine about which our selves cannot agree. 'Tis an universal maxim, that *Truth is always consonant to it self;* and therefore, where they see so little *unity*, they have too much *temptation* to doubt of truth. He that wandring should meet a company that offer to conduct him to his journey's end, might reasonably incline to deliver himself up to their *guidance;* but if he find them unagreed upon the way, one disputing for this, and another for that, and every one protesting against all but his own, he would sure retract his *confidence*, and think they offer'd him only more variety of mistakes, resolve it as safe to trust himself to his *own* errors, as other *mens*. And this alas! seems to be too exact a parallel of the present case; we Christians do so mutually damn one another, that a poor *Turk*, or *Heathen* will think, he rather *multiplies*, than *ends* his danger, by associating himself with us; for there being so many parties, which soever he joyns himself to, there will be abundant odds against him; so that if he could be secur'd the truth were among us, yet the great difficulty of finding it out would be a very disheartning consideration. Besides, men love in *transactions* of great importance to have as many and as *credible vouchers* as may be, and upon that score 'twill sure be but a cold inducement to any to turn *Christian*, to foresee, that when he has done so, he shall be *disown'd* by far the greater part of that number, and that at his entrance into the *Church*, he shall be met with almost as many *anathemas*, as when he was an *Infidel*. Nay, I scarce know whether I may call it an entrance into the *Church*, or rather into a *conventicle*, or *particular congregation*, our schisms and separations having hardly left a possibitity of *external communion* with the *universal Church*, since the communicating with one part of it does infallibly excommunicate from another. Thus have we placed our *flaming sword* (though God knows no *Cherubim*) at the gate of our paradise, and when God calls all men to the *waters of life*, our contentions have made them like *those of Marah*, so bitter and unpleasant, as deters and averts men from them: Which, as it is in the highest degree injurious to them, so is it cotumelious to *Him*, whose invitations are by this means frustrated; 'tis in some degree the evacuating one of the main *purposes* of Christ's coming into the world, which was to *call men out of darkness into his marvellous light;* and as *He* was thus sent by his Father, so also were the *Apostles* solemnly commissionated by him to preach to the Gentile world, who with indefatigable industry and resolute sufferings pursued the *charge:* And sure this is competent evidence, that the design was of the greatest and most weighty importance, and such as can never be out-dated, till there cease to be objects of it, unbelievers to convert: And by that let us measure the guilt of obstructing it, which, if we would impartially do, I assure my self the most *passionate bigot* of any party must confess, that it infinitely outweighs all the piety his doctrine can pretend to, that his *peculiar* Church gains not so much as the *Catholick* loses; and that how confidently soever he hath canoniz'd his quarrels, they are indeed but the worst sort of Heathens, and serve to keep out the better. Yet, besides the mischiefs they do in relation to those that are *without*, they are extremely pernicious to those that are *within*, and that not only to some *one sect*, but like an *universal poison*, that is equally deadly to the most contrary complexions, they operate on the most distant ranks of professors, the *tender* and the *obdurate*, the *scrupulous* and the *profane*. And first, for the tender tremulous Christian, 'tis easie to discern how much he must be distracted and amaz'd by them; for while he hears each sect thunder out *damnation* against each other, he cannot but be startled at the *danger* of adhering to the *wrong;* and though that may a while excite his diligence to discover the *right*, yet when he comes to that inquisition, he will meet with so many *polemick intricacies* to entangle him, that after many turns, first to one side, and then to another, he will be apt to think, the only *clue* to extricate him out of this *labyrinth* of many religions, *is to abandon all*. Nor is this *mere speculation* and *conjecture*, God knows,

and stagger the faith of its old professors.

knows, we have had successively through the whole round of error too many *practick experiments* of it. Several persons there have been, whose zeal to find out *truth* by an unhappy rule of *false*, directed them to allow of *every error:* While like *sick men*, who desire to die good-cheap, they put themselves into the hands of any *empirick*, follow each bold pretender, that has the impudence to talk of truth, till superstition ends in profanation, *godliness* proves *atheism*, and by having been of *many sects*, at last have *no religion.* And surely this is a most unhappy effect of our discords, thus to be *stumbling-blocks* in our brother's way; and when we remember the woes pronounc'd against those that shall scandalize any of the little ones, 'twill be strange how men can think to approve their *Christianity* by the ruin of their brother's, or secure themselves of *Heaven*, by keeping others thence: For though Christ tells his Disciples, there should be some that should think it a *service* to God *to kill their bodies*, yet to fancy the *destroying of souls* so too, is a deception of which we have neither *record*, nor *prediction* in holy Writ, and is a superfetation of the spirit of delusion, peculiar to those who have placed their own sanctity in these religious wranglings, which serve to destroy it in other men. And as they thus serve on the one side to shipwreck the *faith* of these weak unstable souls, so do they on the other advance the *impiety* of the daring sinner; for as they are temptation to the *one*, so are they pretence and excuse to the *other*, to bid defiance to all religion. He whose dissolute *affections* have so long been courting his *understanding* to turn atheist, will sure not lose the advantage of so plausible an argument, as our *divisions* afford him; and since his *lusts* engage him in an irreconcileable war against the *practick part* of piety, he will most gladly embrace this occasion of quarrel against the *theory* also: So making himself entire, and extinguishing those uneasie regrets and misgivings arising from the repugnancy of his *life* to his *belief*. It were not hard to give a *compendium* of these mens *Logick*, and draw out those *schemes* of discourse, by which from our *differences* in religion, they infer the *discarding* of all. But I fear these are already too well known, and where they are not, I should be loth to be any man's instructor. This is, I am sure too palpable, that how *fallacious* soever these reasonings are, they have been very *operative*, as appears by the number of those *avowed atheists* among us, who placing themselves *in the seat of the scorner*, give themselves much pleasing divertisement, by *deriding* our eager *scuffles* about that which they think nothing. If any man think that the *Church* is no loser by the defection of such *libertines*, I must be allowed to dissent from him: For first, there are examples of the most vicious persons, that have been reduced, and while they retain their Christian *belief*, that lays such undeniable obligations to good *life*, that whenever they resume their *reason*, they must take up *virtue* also with it; so that there is an equal possibility of their being *good*, that there is of their being *rational:* But when all hope and fear of a future estate is disclaim'd, when those cords are broken which should pull them up from the dungeon, then, and not before is their state visibly desperate. But besides this possibility of *recovering them*, the danger of *losing others* is to be considered. Bold *atheism* is like a raging *pestilence*, which taints the very *air*, so that those impious *discoursings* which are the *effects* of some mens vices, may be the *cause* of others; and we too often see, that those who ascended themselves *by degrees*, do *in an instant* advance their *proselytes* to the height of irreligion, as appears by the strange proficiency of some, whose years allow them not to have arrived to it otherwise than *per saltum.* And sure this spreading contagion has been so destructive to the Church, that it were to be wisht, the mere titular Christians had rather remain'd such, than thus to have averted others from being so much.

and tempts bad men to doubt of, and bid defiance to all religion.

In propagating our particular sects and opinions we expose Christianity in general.

9. And now if all these scandals be worth our regret, if the emboldening and exasperating the *bad*, the corrupting the *innocent*, and the decay of Christian *profession* consequent to both, be *formidable evils*, we know where to charge the *guilt.* Our *contentions* must be arraign'd as *accessaries*, if not *principals* in the case: And then sure it will befit our angry zealots to consider, whether this be the way of *advancing God's truth, or what account they will give to the Lord of the vineyard*, who, while they pretend to dress and prune the *branches*, do thus debilitate and destroy the *roots.* Nay, indeed in this they are treacherous even to their own pretensions, for all those several religions which they so tenderly cherish, have no *proper root* of their own, but like excrescencies, spring out of the *main stock* of Christianity, live by its juice and moisture, and consequently can never hope to survive it. And then certainly, there can be nothing more ridiculous, than to express their kindness to the *one*, by ways that are so ruinous to the *other.* 'Tis as if a *passenger* in a ship should, to fortifie his private *cabin*, tear up the *planks*, and expose the whole vessel to sinking: Yet thus preposterously do many of our *chief pilots* apply their care. In the mean time, it cannot but be a very *delightful prospect* to the grand enemy of souls, to see us thus busily promote

his interest, lay *snares* for our selves, and by our own *folly* do that which all his *subtilties* could never compass. Nor can we think but he will be as *officious* to us as is possible, while we are thus employed, will help us to contrive our *Turrets*, while he sees we pluck out *stones* from the *foundation* to build them with; nor shall we ever want *new models* of Churches, so long as they thus help to destroy the *old*; and how aptly they are fitted for that purpose, needs (I suppose) no farther demonstration.

CHAP. XII.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes, in reference to Civil Peace.

1. AND now sure we cannot but conclude our *Contentions* highly injurious to *Christianity*, that thus assault it both in the *Practick* and *Theory*: And indeed how fierce soever our quarrels are with one another, the heaviest blows are sure to fall on that, which as in its constitution is of the most pacifick temper imaginable, so it has the common fate of reconcilers to suffer from all parties. But *godliness having the promise as well of this life, as of that which is to come*, it often happens that there is such a consent between our *spiritual* and *secular* concerns, that the Mischiefs that oppress the *one* do reflect on the *other*: And indeed religion when intire and united, is one of the best bonds of *civil* as well as *ecclesiastical* Peace, (as even those attest, who defying all other ends of it, do yet admit it a useful state engine;) from whence 'tis consequent, that the *distractions* and *divisions* in that must have proportionably a contrary influence, and infect *communities* with discord, tumult and disorders. And this is an *effect*, with which I think not unfit to bring up the *rear* of the foregoing Mischiefs, it being not so purely secular, as not to suit our present subject; for *outward order* and *unity* can never be so innocently disturb'd, but that *Christianity* must be wounded in it also: And besides, it may perhaps obtain more consideration than the former, as being of a nature wherein the generality of men will think themselves the most concern'd; for though there be many that can look on the ruine both of Christian practice and profession, with *Gallio*'s indifference, *Acts* 18. 17. and care for none of those things, yet when the siege draws closer, when they find themselves begirt in their worldly interests, and that the same deluge that overwhelms *Churches*, may bear down *Palaces* also, perhaps they may think the matter not so contemptible. And first, as to the truth of the observation, the *world* has too long groaned under the *experiment* to need farther proof. That *bitterness* which first tainted the *waters of the Sanctuary*, hath from thence diffus'd it self into our *common streams*, and like the *Egyptian plague*, left none uncorrupted: For whether we look upon families, neighbourhoods, kingdoms, any the *least*, or any the *greatest* societies, we find the miserable *trophies* of our *holy wars*, in factions and confusions; I would I could not say rapine and blood also. For the *first* of these, the domestick jars caus'd by different opinions, the *instances* are numerous, or rather innumerable, which our own *age* and *nation* afford us. How many servants have on this score been at defiance with their masters? Children with their parents? Nay, wives with their husbands? Such an unhappy force is there in *mistaken zeal*, that it dissolves the *closest bonds*, violates all obligations natural or civil, while under pretence of service to God, like the *Pharisee*'s corban, it evacuates all duty to man; and this has made such ruptures and divisions in families, that that delightful prospect the *Psalmist* so much commends, that of *brethrens dwelling together in unity*, *Psalm* 133. is scarce any where to be met with; but instead of that, such rancour and bitterness, treachery and malice, as if men either mistook Christ's *prediction*, *Luke* 12. 52. for a *precept*, or at least were willing to advance his *prophetick* office upon the ruine of his *kingly*, and to verifie his *presage* by breaking his *command*. And as the œconomical order and peace is thus disturb'd, so if he that misses quiet *at home* should seek for it *abroad*, he will soon find himself disappointed, and discern that as the *societies* grow greater, so do the *disorders* also, and that private strifes do as much combine to make *parties* and *factions*, as families do to make *Cities* and *Corporations*. By this means that mutual communication, by which the members of civil bodies should not only benefit one another, but secure the whole, is interrupted, and men live not as *neighbours*, but *spies*, always upon designs of entrapping and ensnaring; for while they look on one another as *enemies to God*, they think that re-

Our Contentions are very injurious to our civil Peace.

1. They disturb the Peace of Families:

2. They disturb the Peace of Cities and Corporations:

kinds all obligations of *friendship among themselves*, and when religion bears the *standard*, the *war* will be concluded necessary and honourable. But though it be so in *imagination only*, 'tis sure there are some, who make it *really profitable*; for as in most *camps* the greater number are attracted rather by hope of *booty*, than concern for the *cause*; so here, many men *list* themselves under one party, that they may have pretence to *prey* upon the rest. And to that end several very commodious *axioms* have been taken up, as, *That no faith is to be kept with Hereticks; That dominion is founded in grace*, &c. By such measures as these the goods of the *Egyptians* become lawful prizes to any, that please to call themselves *Israelites*; and indeed *Jews* they may be call'd in that notion we vulgarly use it of *unjust* and *cruel extortioner*: But sure not such *Israelites* as Christ defines *Nathanael*, *John*. 1. 47. *without guile*: For having thus consecrated their frauds, and found an expedient of serving *God* and *Mammon* together, there is no piece of *deceit* either too big, or too little for them; no transaction is so important, which can oblige their *fidelity*; none so trivial as to discourage their *rapine*. Opportunity is the only measure and rule of their *attempts*, by this means no *obligation* of contract, no *laws* of commerce can escape unviolated; every thing is lawful that may weaken the wicked, and that *zeal* which makes men *Saints* in the Church or Conventicle, can make them *thieves* in the shop or market. Thus is Piety made an engine of *rapine*, and by these *religious riots*, all *boundaries*, wherewith laws or equity have fenc'd mens distinct *properties*, are thrown down: And sure this is a most carnal consequent of our spiritual debates, and bids fair towards the reducing us to that state of common hostility, which some have fancied to be the *original condition* of mankind: For it renders commerce so dangerous, that men may within a while think it safer to trust their own *strengths*, than to the shelter of those *laws* and *civil compacts*, which they see so avowedly evacuated. And upon this account, though the injury be immediately done to *private* persons, it becomes a *publick* mischief; yet alas, these are but the more moderate *effects* of our Dissentions; they afford more expedite and compendious ways of *publick* ruine; the *defrauding* or *undermining* of a few neighbours are *petty prizes* for those that think they have the sole right to the creature, and are those *meek* who are to *inherit the earth*, and every such acquist only serves to flesh them for a farther chase. The *spoils* of a broken kingdom will afford something worth the *scrambling* for: And nothing more fit to *break it*, than a pretence of religion, which like the *stone* that smote *Nebuchadnezzar's* image, has shivered the most goodly monarchies. And accordingly, we see no *engine* is more constantly us'd by men of seditious spirits, to disturb and subvert Governments: Indeed there can be nothing so advantageously fitted for the purpose. For should such persons unmask their design, and shew it in its *native ugliness*, should they avow the shaking of a *kingdom* merely to establish themselves in a condition of *wealth* and *grandeur*, the new moulding of a Government only that they might shape their own shares in it, 'twere impossible they should find any abettors; for though the *multitude* are always in preparation for *change*, yet 'tis not on intuition of benefit to some *private persons*, but of somewhat wherein *themselves* may partake: Nor is even the madness of the people mad enough to expose all their *own interest*, and most important concerns, only to promote *those of others*. It has therefore always been both the rule and practice for such designers to suborn the *publick interest*, to countenance and cover their *private*; to cry up *Diana* to secure their own *gain*, and to make the seduced *populacy* like the *jackcal* to the *lion*, hunt that prey which themselves mean to devour. And of all those artifices, by which such *incendiaries* have set kingdoms in a *flame*, none has been more universally successful than the *pretext* of religion, which is thought so *creditable a cause* to engage in, as can convert the *infamous titles* of rebel and traitor into those of patriot and saint, and consequently, take off all discouragement arising from the disreputation of such an enterprize: And no less potent is it in solving the scruples of its unlawfulness; for by a dexterous anticipation, it makes conscience a *party*, that it may exclude it from being *judge*, and by that only fallacy of supposing *religion* to be *a just ground of quarrel*, makes way for all the wild consequences deducible from that *false principle*: And indeed where that is throughly fastned, the *mischiefs* are not only *great*, but *incurable*, and yet the more so, by how much the person is more zealous. For alas! what will it avail to tell such a man, 'tis a sin to *fight against his King*, when he will tell you 'tis a greater not to *fight for his God*? that he contracts a *heinous* guilt in violating the *peace* of the Church, when he with as great confidence believes, he *merits* in propagating its *truth*? that he is accountable for the *blood* of his brethren, when he thinks he has like the *Levites*, *Exod*. 32. consecrated himself in it, and offer'd it an acceptable *sacrifice* to God? Thus unhappily are these men fortified in their *sin*, by presuming it

3. They disturb the Peace of whole Kingdoms and Provinces.

their

their *virtue*; and while the *furious zeal* of such is made subservient to the *wicked craft* of others, 'tis a most *apt instrument* of publick mischief, there being no attempt so desperate, which such may not be put upon, who are methinks us'd, as *Hannibal* is said to have done those oxen, whose *horns* he first fired, and then sent them to disturb the *Roman* camp: These men as those *beasts* are found very useful for the molesting of others; but commonly all they acquire to themselves, is the *smart* of their own *flames*. Few of those who thus in the simplicity of their heart follow an *Absalom* or a *Sheba*, that do not either miscarry together with the *design*, or else live to discern how much their *credulity* was abused; and that both *religion* (however pretended) and *those* that fought for it, were only made *properties* to promote the *lusts of those* who despised both. But 'tis unnecessary to insist farther on the *effects* of such religious fury, of which *we of this nation* have had so many and so *costly evidences*, as far transcend the most *tragical descriptions*. God grant we may never have other than our *past experiences* to measure them by: But certainly there is little reason to be secure, so long as the *root* of them, our *speculative differences* daily encrease; for unless we could suppose an age of such innocence, that there should be none who would *take* any undue advantages, 'tis sure there will be enough *given*: And indeed when we reflect upon our past distractions, and consider how trivial the *matter* of most of those debates was, whose *manner* has been so cruelly solemn; how our slightest *problems* have been writ in *blood*, that many thousands have been made *naked* to keep the *surplice off* a few mens backs, and we have pulled down our Churches in displeasure at the *windows*; when I say these and a thousand the like are considered, we must conclude, that there can never *want* occasion to them that (in the *Apostle*'s phrase) *desire* occasion: The *lightest distempers* in the Church being *contagious*, and most apt (when fomented by ambitious designers) to beget an *universal plague* in the common-wealth. And now who can without horror consider these miserably perverted *effects* of Christian religion, that *that* which was design'd the most *inviolable bond of unity*, should like those curles of entangled snakes with which *Erinnys* is said to have infuriated *Athemas* and *Ino*, become the *fatal incendiary of the mortallest hatred?* That *that Oeconomy* which was meant to *regulate*, should be the instrument of *confounding* and *embroiling* the world; and a *Gospel of peace* should thus be made the *incentive to war*, and create fiercer quarrels than those it was to have compos'd. To *turn the grace of God into wantonness*, is justly branded as a *great crime*, but sure to turn it *into malice* is yet a *greater*. And though every sin offers violence to our religion, yet *this* is of all others the most *barbarous*, thus to make it assassinate it self, become a kind of *felo de se*, and contribute to its own ruine. And that this is the case, is I presume sufficiently evident in all the *foregoing instances*, which as they are most obviously the *effect* of our eager disputes, so are they no less visibly *destructive* to Christianity in all its interests, leave it neither *root* nor *branch*, neither *inward* vigour, nor *outward* lustre; so at once rendring it both infertile and unamiable. 'Twas a piece of hostile severity against *Moab*, *to fill the land with stones, thereby to render it barren*, 2 *Kings* 3. 25. The slingers went about, and smote it; but what *that* suffered from *profest enemies*, the *Church* daily sustains from those that call themselves her best *friends*. Our *Benjamites* are so in love with their skill of slinging to a hair's breadth, their nice criticisms, distinctions, and subtilties, have cast abroad so many *stones of contention*, that the Church is become perfect *quarry*, utterly *steril* and *unfruitful*, as to all those good works, for the production whereof she was so peculiarly fenced and cultivated by God; nay, 'twere well if *barrenness* were the worst, and that she had not on the other side acquir'd an unhappy *degenerous fertility*: But what a numerous and accursed issue spring from this unpeaceable temper, the foregoing considerations do too sadly demonstrate; and I doubt not every attentive observer will be able to add *more* (though not *truer*) instances; and besides to discern that this *spurious brood*, like that of *Hagar*, is grown so wantonly insolent, as to despise the *right heir* of the promise. The true *Gospel graces* of meekness, peaceableness and universal Charity are accounted earthly *phlegmatick qualities*, we disclaim that *Holy Ghost*, which descends in the appearance of the *dove*, nay, or in *fire* either, unless it be like that of *Elijah*, to consume all that disgust us; nor do we measure our *religion* so much by the opposition it makes to our *lusts*, as to those whom we first make, and then call our *enemies*. Thus miserably have we chang'd the scene, and by *calling evil good, and good evil*, have accumulated injuries upon our oppressed Christianity, not only robb'd it of its *rule*, but of its *reputation* also. And do we daily thus see *Ishmael* mocking *Isaac*, and shall we not think it time to cast out the bondwoman and her son? Shall we for ever cherish this generation of *vipers* to tear out the *bowels* of our common mother? I pray God the question have not as much

of *presagious expostulation.* For if we consider the present state of things, how our *contentions* plead not only *right*, but *prescription*, there seems not much hope of dispossessing them, and yet less, when 'tis remembred, how they have entwisted themselves not only with the *passions*, but *interests* of men; two such *potent abettors*, as will buoy up the most *forlorn cause.* The truth is, there are many *subterraneous springs* which feed *this ocean*, and though religion and piety be on all hands demurely pretended, yet as we have seen the *effects* of our debates very *disconsonant* to such a profession; so if we examine the *originals* and *causes*, we shall find them for the most part as *widely distant.* It may not be amiss to take a short view of some of them; for though I cannot hope the *discovery* of the causes will contribute to the *general cure*, yet perhaps it may prove an *antidote* to some particular persons, who will be the less apt to admire the verdure of the *leaves* (the flourishing appearances of *zeal* and *piety*) when they find both *fruit* and *root* of so poisonous a quality.

CHAP. XIII.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; and first, Pride.

One great Cause of our Contentions and Disputes is Pride.

1. AND in this inquest we find Pride already arraigned to our hands by the Wisest of men, *Prov.* 13. 10. *Only by Pride cometh contention.* It is indeed a most prolifick vice, and there are few *sins* to which it is not either a *parent*, or *nurse*: But there is scarce any which does more betray its immediate descent from it, than this of *strife* and *debate*, which has so many of the *lineaments* and *features* of the deform'd mother, as sufficiently attests its *extraction.* And as this is true of *all* strifes in general, so particularly of *those* whereof we now treat: For Pride being it self an internal sin, it has such a neighbourhood with all the notions and speculations of the mind, that it easily makes impressions on them: Nor are we to wonder that the sacredness of divine things is not *amulet* enough against its *charms*, when we remember that the *first act* of Pride that ever was committed, was levelled even *at God* himself; and as it took up its first seat in a spiritual substance, so has it ever since never acted more *naturally*, and therefore more *vigorously*, than about spiritual matters. Of this the Church in all ages has had many costly experiments; for if we trace the catalogues of heresies from *Simon Magus* his days down to our own, we shall find Pride a *principal actor* in every *scene*, though perhaps in *various dresses.* For though Pride be always in the general an affectation of some transcendency, yet it differs as to the particular object, according to the several estimates men make of excellencies. So that the *propugners* of new opinions, though they have this *common aim*, that they seek their *own exaltation*, yet do not always do it in the *same instances.* For example, some have coveted the repute of *profound inquisitors*, and this vanity has prompted them to dive so deep into the *bowels* of every the *plainest doctrine*, till at last they have twisted and entangled them into the most *perplexing difficulties.* These *navigators* think they have never sail'd successfully, till they have found out a *terra incognita*, though God knows they bring nothing from thence for the benefit of the habitable world; nor make it their business to *resolve* doubts, but *start* them. *Another sort* of men there are of so fastidious and petulant wits, that they disdain an *opinion* of which themselves are not the *authors*; they love not to have their understandings prescrib'd to by the preconceptions of others, how divinely soever inspir'd, and will rather have a religion of their *own making*, than of *his* whom they pretend to worship. And this, 'tis to be doubted, is the bottom of the great *veneration* some have paid to *Reason*, which they have set up in the *throne*, not only in defiance of *blind implicit assent*, but even of *divine revelation.* But in the mean time 'tis to be observ'd, that 'tis not reason *in general*, the common excellency of our nature, that is thus advanc'd, but every man's own *private* and *individual*; which upon a just scanning, will often be found the most distant thing from what it is call'd; *passion* and *fancy*, by that omnipotent advantage of being a man's own, often passing for *deep discourse* and *ratiocination*: And what a fruitful harvest of tares such seed is apt to produce, our *reason* would inform us, if our *experience* did not. To these we may add *another rank* of men, who vehemently thirsting after a *name* in the world, hope to acquire that by being the *disseminators* of *novel doctrines*; they think while they go on in the *beaten tract*, they shall be obscur'd in the *throng*; the only way to make themselves conspicuous is to be singular: Thus

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fondly choosing to be eminent, though by the infamous characters of *heretick* or *schismatick*, and (like him that fir'd *Diana*'s temple to secure himself from oblivion) build themselves *monuments* of the *Churches ruin:* And sure this *Theudas* his ambition of being somebody, has helpt to raise more *opinions*, than he did *men*. Yet commonly it answers it even in that circumstance also; for when by *separating themselves* from the *unity of the faith* they have rendred themselves remarkable, their next aim is to have *others joyn* to them; and so they may have the honour of being *leaders*, care not though it be into the ditch. To be call'd of men *Rabbi*, *Rabbi*, is enchanting musick to any *Pharisee*, and serves like the timbrels in *Tophet*, to drown the cries not of their *children*, but *mothers* scorching in the flames of their contention. Indeed so impetuous and uncontroulable is this kind of *vanity*, that like a mighty torrent, it bears down all before it, overwhelms not only the opposite *virtues*, but even all *vices* that are not of its own confederacy. Men can in this case lay severe restraints upon their most *intimate sensualities*, when they suspect them *treacherous* to this grand design. The *wolf* shall be muzled, and made to behave himself with the meekness beseeming the *sheeps* clothing. The *swine* shall be washt, and by an unnatural violence withheld from the *mire:* All their rapacious and bestial *appetites* controul'd and made tame, that they worry not their *reputation*. And all this for a little naked *popularity*, for whose dear purchase very many have thought fit to divest themselves both of lawful and unlawful *enjoyments*; and have thought the tumultuous *applause* of a few factious spirits worth all that *self-denial*. But all Pride is not so perfectly *chamælion*, as to subsist upon this *mere air*, there is another kind of it that proposes to it self something beyond this: Such is the affectation of rule and dominion, which, though in respect of any real good to the ruler, is as very a *Chimæra* as the former; yet commonly they that are under such a *jurisdiction*, find to their cost 'tis more than *imaginative*. And God knows, this *aspiring humour* has been no less fatally active in *ecclesiastick*, than in *civil* affairs; nor has the Church ever been in more danger of *anarchy*, than by *those* who most impatiently coveted a share in its government; for where this spirit of ambition is the impellent, it does, like the *demoniack* in the Gospel, burst asunder all *fetters* and *chains*, violates the unity both of doctrine and discipline, nor is any attempt too bold for men thus animated: They who long to be in authority, think the *door* opens not quick enough for their entry, and impatient of so tedious an expectation, choose rather to make breaches in the *walls* (nay, sometimes to undermine the *foundation*) than to want an *access* to their desires. Neither is there any thing so sacred, which upon this occasion they cannot prostitute; when *Diotrephes*, 3 *John* 9. seeks preheminence, the dictates even of an *Apostle* shall be rejected; and even the divinity of *Christ*, *God blessed for ever*, be trampled on, when *Arius* wants a footstool to climb up to his affected greatness. In a word, if we examine the occurrencies of all ages, we shall find that either the eagerness of *acquiring*, or the revenge of *missing dignities*, have been the great *instigators* of ecclesiastick feuds; and sure our *modern* stories are not likely to fall short of the *ancient*, in examples of this kind. And as Pride makes *some* thus passionately desirous of rule, so it makes *others* as impatient of being ruled, and even those who cannot hope to arrive to *give* laws, will not endure to be *under* those already established. That *this* is indeed the Christian *liberty*, for which many in our days have so unchristianly contended, is too apparent, the *fundamental quarrel* has been against *subjection:* Yet to countenance and abet that, whole armies of frivolous cavils have been rais'd, and the *Church* attacked in every the remotest concern; and though there be nothing farther from that unity of mind, to which the Simile was first affixt, yet in a perverse sense it imitates the *ointment of Aaron*, in *descending from the head to the skirts of the clothing:* Not only the *supreme*, and *more eminent parts*, but the most *slight extrinsick* and *inferior relatives* to religion being asperst and depraved; and the most *innocent* circumstances of civil or natural actions made *criminal*, when applied to divine things. A strange *infective power*, which these men have conveyed into God's service, that it must thus pollute every thing that approaches it! That the *place* where his honour dwells, must become a *pesthouse*, and diffuse *contagion* to all in it: (I wish, by the way, their *sacrilege* had not been too valiant in despising the danger of those *infected utensils*, which may perhaps sadly verifie the reproach, and prove *treacherous prizes*.) And when mens *zeal* operates thus unkindly, when the pretence of *internal sanctity* devours all *outward decency*, and *God* is to be honoured and exalted by those ways, whereby *men* would think themselves affronted, and vilified; we have too great reason to think such a zeal as little according to *godliness*, as *knowledge*, and that it is not so much the *tenderness* of their consciences, no nor generally the *weakness* of their brains, but the *iron sinew*

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in their necks, which makes them at once so scrupulous, and so clamorous; for though the *former* might be suppos'd owing to error, the *latter* can surely proceed from nothing but Pride. Several other instances might be given, to shew how that pernicious temper has contributed to the rise and first being of our divisions; and having thus given them birth, it does not, like the *ostrich*, abandon its brood, but has as great an influence in the *cherishing* and *maintaining*, as it had in *creating* them. Of this there need no other proof than the mere *nature* of Pride, which, as it averts nothing more than *self condemnation*; so upon pain of that appearance, 'tis irreversibly engag'd in the pursuit of its first undertakings, any *desisting* being interpretatively a *confession* either of an error, or a defeat, both which are insupportable to an assuming temper: So that besides the *original incentives* forementioned, it has this of *disdain* superadded to actuate its motions. And accordingly we find they are at this rebound the more violent, not only the *success*, but the *credit* of the first enterprize depending upon a vigorous prosecution: So that *Catiline*'s maxim of *villany* seems to have been adopted into some mens *divinity*; and they think past crimes are only to be secur'd by more and greater. Nor is it only *hope* to atchieve their *design*, or hide their *shame*, which thus animates them, *despair* will do it to a yet higher degree. Our concupiscible and irascible appetites dwell not so remote, but they are ready reserves to one another, and what was *desire* in the pursuit, becomes *anger* and *revenge* in the disappointment; and sure we need not be told the wild effects of those passions. How many men have in a *furious despair* over acted even their own *projects*, and have made it a malicious consolation in their ruin, to get it attended with that of the publick? As *Herod*, who to secure a *lamentation* at his death, commanded a *massacre* should accompany it; or (to give a more ecclesiastical instance) like *Aerius*, who fought the abolishing of that order in the Church, whereof himself could not partake. I wish no man's *conscience* in our days were qualified to suggest a fresher example. But whilst 'tis so many ways the *interest* of Pride to abet our *contentions*, we cannot think it so sluggish or unindustrious an *agent*, as not to find out *expedients* for its purpose. I shall not attempt to give a particular of its *instruments*, when I have said that *schism* is one of them, I need not add more, since that alone serves both to *complete* and *perpetuate* the mischief of all our speculative dissentions. How close a band of concord the *communicating in holy duties* is, we may learn by *Jeroboam*, who seems so well to have understood its unitive efficacy, that he durst not trust the newly divided *tribes* in a joynt resort to the Temple; and therefore lest the *rupture* he had made in the state should close again, he thinks it necessary to make *another* in the Church, and secure his defection from his *prince*, by that from his *God*. But we need not borrow a *testimony* from that his impious *policy*, we have a more *authentick attestation* from the holy *Psalmist*, who, when he would describe the *greatest intireness*, exemplifies it by the *walking to the house of God as friends*, Psal. 55. 14. And the *Apostle* goes yet higher, and from our common *participation* of the eucharist, infers not only our *union*, but our *incorporation*. *We being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread*, 1 Cor. 10. 17. And then sure we may on the contrary conclude, that our *separation* must have the quite distant effects; alienate our *affections*, and by that means still more estrange our *judgments*. For besides that 'tis natural to men to think they can never run far enough from that they begin to loath, they are in their own defence to amplifie the *differences*, that they may acquit themselves from the *scandal* of a causless separation; and this, God knows, is the usual method among us, when we have broken *communion*, our only study is not how to *repair*, but *justifie it*. The adversaries *tenets* are rigorously scanned, new *charges* exhibited, and the *schism* defended upon those later discoveries, which were no motives to the making it. And then sure no man can doubt but this is a *proper way* both to *multiply and eternize disputes*; and 'tis abundantly manifest, that vanity and elation of mind is the cause that men thus prefer a *mistaken reputation*, before their own *innocence*, or the Church's *peace*. Indeed if we throughly consider it, we shall find *Pride* is one of the fatallest instruments of excision, the *two-edg'd sword* by which adverse parties do mutually cut themselves from one another. The very *elements* and *constitutive parts* of a schismatick being the *esteem of himself*, and the *contempt of others*. *I am not as this Publican*, was, we know, the voice of the proud *Pharisee*, whose very name signifies *separation*, and our modern *separatists* do but eccho the same note, when they pronounce all those *heretical* or *carnal*, from whom they have withdrawn. Or, perhaps they derive from a yet more ancient president, those of whom the Prophet *Isaiah* speaks, *Isa.* 65. 5. which say, *Stand by thy self, come not near me, for I am holier than thou*; an insolent kind of language, which the *Cathari* in the *primitive times* did not more exactly tran-

ſcribe, than many *ſects* of differing denominations have done in *ours*. But 'tis to be remembred, that while the *Phariſee* lookt ſo faſtidiouſly on the poor *Publican*, he renounc'd communion in prayers much more acceptable than his own; and thoſe *refined zealots*, who fear'd *contagion* from the approach of their more innocent brethren, could boldly venture on the *pollutions* of the moſt deteſtable idolatries: And God knows the note has too ready an application in both inſtances. In the mean time, 'tis a ſad contemplation, that ſo much of that *zeal* which makes ſuch a gliſtering in the world, ſhall, when brought to the touch, be found *adulterate*; that the tranſcendent *purity* men boaſt of, ſhould prove but a more ſublimated *wickedneſs*, and their *pretence* to ſpirituality be verified only in *ſpiritual Pride*. Alas! is not the whole *circuit* of ſecular things wide enough to contain this *ſwelling humour*? Are there not *pomps* and *vanities* of the world enough to entertain this one *luſt*, but muſt this *Moabite* be brought into the *Sanctuary*? Can we not be *elevated* enough, unleſs we *trample upon* all that is holy, and make *religion* factor for our *ambition*? We find ſome very confidently point out *antichriſt* upon the ſtrength of this one predicted circumſtance, that he was to *ſit in the Temple of God*. But what need we travel beyond the *Alps* to find out that, which *every where* preſents it ſelf? Our Pride does too unhappily anſwer the deſcription; and though there is no inſtance wherein it can ceaſe to be *antichriſtian*, yet ſurely it is more eminently ſo, when it thus uſurps *God's ſeat*, and rules in ſacred things. Would God the *pains* and *animoſity*, which has been ſpent in diſcovering and reviling *other* antichriſts, had been diverted to the pulling down of *this*, the labour would have been more effectual even to the immediate end of the deſigners; for were this Pride *eradicated*, the foundation of all ſpiritual uſurpations were *undermin'd*. But alas! thoſe who exclaim the moſt loudly againſt all *foreign tyranny* on their conſciences, do obſequiouſly bow to this *inteſtine uſurper*, make an entire dedition of themſelves, and ſubmit to the ſevereſt and ignobleſt *vaſſalage*. They have inveſted it with ſo abſolute and ſovereign a power, that (as *Samuel* warns the *Iſraelites* of their king, 1 *Sam.* 8.) they are not to call any thing their own, when it is uſeful to its ſervice: All their powers, all their intereſts are devoted to it, and that not only to adorn its *pomp*, but to fight its *battles*. Men quarrel and contend till not only *themſelves*, but even *Chriſtianity* it ſelf expire in the conteſt. But if it be indeed certain, that every *war* is ſo far unjuſtifiable, as are the *cauſes* of it, 'twill ſurely be a competent prejudice againſt our contentions, that our Pride is ſo much concern'd in them, which is ſo unchriſtian a *motive*, as all the *holy-water* wherewith men have ſprinkled it, can never baptize into a *cleanneſs*; all the *borrowed addreſſes* of zeal and ſanctity, however they may *diſguiſe*, can never *legitimate* it. Thoſe arts of concealment may indeed add a *new guilt*, that of *hypocriſie*, but can never expiate, no nor extenuate the *old*: And how *Saint-like a form* ſoever our *vain-glory* puts on, it does but the more own its derivation from *him*, who can *transform himſelf into an angel of light*, whoſe aſpirings have firſt ſubverted *himſelf*, and now go on to propagate both his crime and ruin to *us*; nor has he ever manag'd that *deſign* with more art or ſucceſs, than by thus making our Pride a *partition-wall* to divide us from *one another*, and conſequently from *God* too; who being, as our Church ſtiles him, the *Author of peace* and *lover of concord*, can never joyn himſelf with the *diſturbers of both*, but muſt neceſſarily be diſobliged by our diſſentions and ſchiſms.

CHAP. XIV.

A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Secondly, Curioſity.

Another Cauſe of our Diſſentions is unwarrantable Curioſity.

1. IF now we proceed farther in our enquiry, we ſhall find, that another grand *incendiary* of our Diſputes is *Curioſity*: A vice, which though in ſome reſpects it may be reckoned a *ſpecies* of the *former*, that of pride, yet in others it admits a *diſtinct conſideration*. This is that baneful *weed* which the Devil made a ſhift to ſteal even into *Paradiſe*, and which has ever ſince affected the *richeſt ſoils*, the moſt pregnant and polite wits; nor did it only eject *man* from thence, but it has improved the *original curſe*, and multiplied thoſe *briars* and *thorns* among which he was caſt, yea, tranſplanted them from the *earth*, where they could only raſe the ſkin, into the *brain*, where they pierce and torture the intellectual and immortal part of man. Nay, farther, even that *ſweat of his brows*, which was to extirpate them from the *ground*,

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serves but to water and cherish them in his mind; his very *industry* being in this case the extremest *ill husbandry*, and the more *pains* he takes, the farther he removes himself from all *real advantages* of his toil.

Curiosity about some things is both sinful and dangerous;

2. There are some parts of *knowledge* which God has thought fit to seclude from us, to fence them, not only as he did the interdicted *tree*, by precept and commination, but with difficulties and impossibilities; made it not only our *sin* and danger, but our *folly* and madness to attempt them. Of this kind are the mysterious parts of our *religion*, which he shews us as it were afar off, to exercise our *faith* and *reverence*, but stoops them not to our *sense* and *disquisition*. These he has placed like the *sun*, where they may influence, not annoy; warm, not scorch us. And would we still permit them to remain at that safe and wholsom *distance*, we should find none but *benign effects*; but so importunate are the instigations of Curiosity, that no *bounds* will keep us from the *mount*: We will needs break through into the *thick darkness*, how dreadful soever the *thunders* and *lightnings* are in the way. Like bold *Phaetons*, we despise all *benefits* wherewith the Father of light and us can court us, unless we may guide his *chariot*; and we moralize the *fable* as well in the tragicalness of the *event*, as the insolence of the *undertaking*; this unhappy Curiosity having not only ruin'd many of the *inquisitors*, but set the whole *world* also in a *conflagration*. Nor is this temerity more *fatal* in its success, than *impious* in its foundation: For, besides that it is a direct *invasion* of God's peculiar, and *violation* of his command, it does evidently imply a *distrust*, either of his wisdom, or his goodness; supposes him either so *ignorant* of the strength of those faculties himself has made, that he has assigned them unproportionable objects, and so they must have new work cut out for them by our selves; or else presumes his *eye evil* towards his own creatures; that as the *Devil* once suggested to our *first parents*, he fears the rivalry of poor mortals, and by an envious detention of some parts of felicity, like one that had been bountiful only upon *surprize* and *incogitancy*, illiberally retracts and contradicts his *original design* of making man completely happy. Nay, indeed this represents him unkind, not only to *us his created images*, but even to that eternal and express image of his person, *the Son of his bosom*, who may well be thought to have been as despised in *his eyes*, as he was once in *ours*, Isa. 53. 3. if he have so cheaply expos'd him for their sakes, to whom he denies any of those *intellectual advantages*, which difference *them* from *beasts*. Thus wickedly curious are we, that rather than converse with *vulgar ordinary things*, we create *prodigies*, put *new forms* upon Him that is *unchangeable*, rob *divinity* of its most inseparable *attribute*, and not only *disobey* God, but *reproach* him. And then 'tis no wonder, if that which affords so little *glory* to God, hath no more *good will* for men, and that which thus wars with *heaven*, leave little peace on *earth*. Indeed if we will be building our *Babels*, and thus assault *Omnipotence*, 'tis but just we should have our *language confounded*, and that that *knowledge*, for which we boldly attempt to rifle God's cabinet, should, like the *coal* from the altar, serve only to embroil and consume the *sacrilegious invaders*. Yet besides what is owing to divine vengeance in the case, the thing has in it self a proper, natural efficiency toward it; for when so many men are engag'd in a *blind search*, 'tis not imaginable they should all *stumble* upon the same notions, and supposing them to fall upon *variety*, 'tis impossible but mens fond overweening of their own conceits and petulant disdains of others, will improve that *variety* into opposition, and that *opposition* into set and solemn feuds. And, God knows, the Church is too effectively acquainted with this *fatal gradation*, and can experimentally attest the *unhappy propriety* of this sort of Curiosity, towards the engendring of *discord* and *confusion*.

in other things 'tis vain, useless and unprofitable.

3. But besides this *higher* rank of things, which God hath set so much *above* us, there are others of an *inferior* sort, as much *below* us, which are concealed from us, not for their *sublimity*, but their *usefulness*; for as God on the one hand remembers that we are but *flesh*, unable to bear the nearer approaches of *divinity*, and so talks with us as once with *Moses* through a cloud: So on the other he forgets not that *he breathed into us the breath of life*, a vital active spirit, whose motions he expects should own the dignity of its *original*, and as it was it self an *emanation* of the essential goodness, should aim at only *real* and *solid good*, and not evaporate and exhaust its powers in *mean* and *impertinent pursuits*. And upon this score also, he has found it necessary to hide many things from us, not that they would *dazle*, but *misemploy* our eye; not *swallow* up our understanding, but *divert* our attention from what is more important: Of this sort are those many thin *aerial speculations*, the certain knowledge whereof would bring us no real advantage, make us at all the wiser to salvation; yet such a value does our *inquisitive nature* set upon every thing for its being *hid*, that as if our

life-

life were bound up with these secrets, and all our felicity dwelt in the shade of these recesses, we pursue this search with indefatigable *industry*, ransack all corners with as great *diligence* as the *woman* for her lost piece of silver, *Luke* 15. 8. And as if this were indeed the *treasure* hid in the field, sell *all* that we have, lay out our whole *selves* upon the *purchase*. Indeed he that shall consider what solemn disquisitions there are upon the slightest and inconsiderablest subjects, with what advertence and concern questions of this kind are bandied in the world, must wonder how men can at once be so *serious* and so *trifling*; or that those who can say *so much*, should not once ask themselves to what purpose they say *any thing*. Yet what multitudes of men are there engag'd in such cases as this? when alas! the quarry is not worth half the toil, could it be gotten: But what *Solomon* says of the *sluggard*, Prov. 12. 27. that *he roasteth not that which he took in hunting*, is true of the contrary temper, these *over-busie spirits*, whose labour is their only reward, they hunt a *shadow*, and chase the *wind*; and when they strain to their utmost speed, there is still the wonted distance between *them* and their *aims*; all their eager pursuits bring them no acquists, but after they have traverst so much *ground*, traced all the *mazes* that learned Curiosity could contrive to perplex men, and studied to the weariness of the *flesh*, if not to the quenching of the *Spirit* too, they are still in the same *ignorance* from whence they set out, and 'twere well if they were also in the same *doubtfulness*: But the unhappiness of it is, they acquire a *confidence* without any *true ground* of it; and get such a knowledge as may *puff up*, but not *edifie*. This was eminently exemplified in the *Gnosticks* of old, whose vain *Chimæra's*, and *foolish questions*, as the *Apostle* calls them, *Tit*. 3. 9. past with them for such a *superlative wisdom*, as gave them insolence to discriminate themselves from others by that swelling *title*, and monopolize the reputation of *science*, which yet, if we believe the great doctor of the *Gentiles*, and he too brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, the greatest *Rabbi* of the *Jews*, was *science* falsly so called. And God knows, they want not successors in this as well as in other particulars; men are so possest with their own *fancies*, that they take them for *oracles*, and think they see visions, and are arriv'd to some extraordinary *revelations* of truth, when indeed they do but dream *dreams*, and amuse themselves with the fantastick *idea's* of a busie imagination. Yet would they only please themselves in the delusion, the frenzy were more innocent; but like the prouder sort of *lunaticks*, they will needs be *kings* and *rulers*, impose their wild *conjectures* for *laws* upon others, and denounce *war* against all that receive them not. And this is that which makes the great combustion and confusion among us; for while one man opines one way, another another, and each will obtrude his *opinion* on every body else, 'tis impossible but the *contests* should be sharp and endless: For each man labours under a double impatience, the *one* of having his own notions rejected, the other of having the quite contrary impos'd on him; and though 'tis true the *reciprocalness* of the injury ought to allay the *displeasure* at it, yet men so much more consider what they *suffer*, than what they *do*, that every one cries out aloud of that hard measure, which himself offers without regret. And between *winds* so contrary and so fierce, 'tis no wonder if *storms* arise; and in such *tempests* has religion so long been tossed, that it now needs the interposition of a divine *miraculous power* to keep it from sinking: For alas! these *skirmishes* expire not with the first propugners of the opinions; they perhaps began as *single duellers*, but then they soon get their troops about them, have their *partizans* and *abettors*, who not only enhance, but entail the feud to posterity. And indeed this propagation of strife, both in these *trifling*, and the former more *profound* speculations, is the most fatal circumstance of the whole case: Were it not for this, though we might have *many errors*, we could have *no sects*. And if the Church might be sometimes wounded with the *darts* of single adversaries, yet she could not be surrounded and besieg'd with *combinations* and *confederacies*. Some straggling soldiers might prove *renegadoes*, but they would not revolt in *troops* and *legions*. We should not have such numerous parties, who with the greatest violation of Christian unity, denominate themselves, not from the *grand author and finisher of our faith*, but from the *first broacher of their idoliz'd opinions*. In the mean time, 'tis a sad contemplation, that a little *vain Curiosity* should weigh so much, or the Church's *peace* so little with us, that we should sacrifice the one to the *satisfaction*, shall I say? or rather to the *whetting* and *inflaming* of the other. But 'tis a yet sadder, that this should chiefly be done by those whose *learning* enables, and whose *profession* should devote to the most noble and most profitable studies; nay, have the highest obligations to correct those *exorbitancies* in others, which with such *art* and *labour* they propagate and teach. How wounding a spectacle is it to see our greatest *heroes*, like *Hercules* at the *distaffe*, thus degenerously employed,

employed, and to find those who were by Christ design'd for *fishers of men*, thus entertain themselves like *children*, with *picking up shells* and *pebbles* on the shore; and which is yet more unmanly, *wrangling* about them too! Indeed at this rate, 'tis no wonder if they make the *Disciples* complaint, *We have travelled all night, and have taken nothing.* This sure is so little the way to win souls, that he whose business it is to destroy them, can very contentedly refer them to this method; can gladly leave us all our nice and subtle *disquisitions*, upon the very same score that one of the *Gothick* commanders advised the sparing of the *Italian schools* and *libraries*; Let us, says he, leave them their books, that whilst they amuse themselves with such *follies*, we may subdue them at our *pleasure*. It is the saying of the Wise man, *There is a wisdom that multiplieth bitterness*; and sure if there be a wisdom acquired by these curious enquiries, 'tis of this sort, like the knowledge of good and evil attained by our first parents, which taught them to know the good only by its *loss*, and the evil by its *smart*. Indeed our too high and transcending *speculations* on the one hand, and our too trivial and unprofitable on the other, are like the *torrid* and *frigid* zones, the one consumes us with its *heat*, the other chills and benumbs us with its *cold*; that turns us to *cinders*, this to *ice*. These little trifling notions being too slight an exercise to keep *heat* in our Christianity, which not only expresses, but maintains its *life* by strong and vigorous motions. And therefore between these *two intemperate*, God has provided us an *habitable clime*, I mean that middle rank of divine truths which tend to practice. Here he would have us dwell and converse, fix our thoughts and studies: Nor need we fear that they are too dry a subject for our contemplation. We see as deep speculators as any now assume to be, found it far otherwise. *David* could entertain himself with the *meditations of God's law* (not his hidden decrees or counsels) *all the day*, Psal. 119. 97. Nay, it seems, the matter was so *copious* and *redundant*, that it could not be confin'd within that *narrow boundary* of time, but invaded the *night* also; forced him to defaulk from his *rest*, to bestow on his *meditations*, *I have thought of thy name, O Lord, in the night season, and have kept thy law*, ver. 55. Neither is it a vain expence of time which it thus tempts to, but gives the happiest improvement; lands at that harbour to which all rational studies tend, gives understanding, *ver.* 130. *makes wise the simple*, Psal. 19. 7. and this also in an eminent degree, such as set him above his teachers, and his elders also. *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies. I have more understanding than my teachers, for thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep thy commandments*, Psal. 119. 98, 99, 100. These are high and liberal elogies of this divine study, and if any shall seek to divert an unwelcome inference by saying, that *David* spoke them only in pious raptures, that they were the transport of his *zeal*, rather than the estimate of his *judgment*; we must resolve the objector far removed from such religious *excesses*, and under the contrary *defect*; yet the *cause* will so well bear an *appeal*, that he may be trusted to consult farther: Let him advise with *Solomon*, whose large desires and possessions too of wisdom must suppose him no stranger to its nature, and he will tell him the very same, and that not in his *devouter extasies*, but in his most *compos'd sedate temper*, when he solemnly seats himself in his school, reads *Ethicks* to his disciples, and professes his design of giving *subtilty* to the simple, and to the young man *knowledge* and *discretion*, Prov. 1. 4. For if his whole book of *Proverbs* be scanned, the sum of it will be found to be nothing else but an *exhortation* to the study of this practick wisdom. Nay, when his own *understanding* was improv'd and advanc'd by *experience* also, when he had not only *begg'd*, but *bought* wisdom, after he had given his Curiosity its full unbounded range, compassed the whole universe, and examin'd not only in *contemplation*, but by sensitive *experiment*, whatever therein could pretend to be that good for the sons of men, *Eccl.* 2. 3. we find after all this busie inquest, he gives up his *verdict* in this form, *Eccl.* 12. 13. Let us hear the end of the whole matter, *Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man*: And now methinks so solemn a decision of the wisest of men, and he too inspir'd by the omniscient God, may be thought of weight enough to acquiesce in. Yet since there are some who love not to weigh in the balance of the Sanctuary, and that had rather receive responses from *Delphos*, than from between the *Cherubims*; let such at least hear even the Heathen Oracle attesting *Socrates* to be the wisest man, because he directed his studies to the *moral part* of learning, which he did to such a degree, as to disparage all those more *aery speculations*, which better'd not mens manners, but were only λέγων ψόφος, *a noise and clattering of words*. And *Pythagoras*'s school defines philosophy, ζωῆς ἀνθρωπίνης κάθαρσιν καὶ τελειότητα, *the cleansing and perfecting of humane life*, which two things are said to be done, first by *virtue*, whose business it is to remove τὴν ἀμετρίαν τῶν παθῶν, *the inordination of our passions*:

Secondly,

Secondly, by *truth*, which restores θεῶν εἶδος, *the image and pourtraicture of God*. And since this is the joynt suffrage both of religion and reason, why should those that pretend to either, defie both, and vainly consume themselves in unprofitable searches? Why should men wander to seek *beggary* and *emptiness*, who may with far less labour be *rich* at home? Alas! 'tis not *bare knowledge*, how great or universal soever, that can possess us of *felicity*. Were it possible for us to have a window into *Heaven*, to see all the divine secrets, yet that might be but like the rich man's prospect into *Abraham*'s bosom, while himself was in the *bottomless pit*. They are not only the *gross* and *illiterate souls* that must feed those *flames*, the most *aerial* and *sublimated* are rather the more proper fuel for an *immaterial fire*; and the knowledge we carry thither, renders us the fitter company for him, who knew every thing, but how to keep himself happy. It was once the observation and wonder of *Plutarch*, that whereas God has several *incommunicable properties*, as power, and immortality, &c. these all men aspir'd to, in the mean time neglected that of *goodness*, wherein he was willing all men should share. And sure there is now cause of the same complaint, we would have omniscience and all parts of divinity besides the holiness; yet alas! those without these would prove but fatal acquists, and that approach towards being *Gods* would only make us the more *Devils*. The only advantageous as well as possible *way* of assimilation with God is by *purity*, and the *means* of that an attentive consideration of those *divine Revelations*, which are to regulate our practice; these at once dispense *light* and *warmth*, direct and revive the soul: And if men would not exhale *vapours* to cloud and darken them, eclipse the clearest truths by *difficulties* of their own creating, no man could miss his way to Heaven for want of light; and yet so vain are they as to think they oblige the world by involving it in darkness, as if their *mists* should, like that *which watered the new form'd earth*, *Gen.* 2. 6. supply the place of the *dew* of Heaven. But certainly to all such in their profusest liberalities we need make no other request than *Diogenes* did to *Alexander*, desire them only that they will not stand between *us* and the *sun*, intercept its rays, and rob us of that which is infinitely better than any thing they can give us. Were this but obtain'd, we should soon discern the inconsiderableness of those things, whose effects have been so sadly considerable to Christendom; those many *Chimæra's*, which we wrangle and fight about, would in this sun-shine appear but *motes* that dance in the air, (though God knows as we manage them, they are the most luxurious rebels to the Prince that rules there.) Were but St. *Paul*'s doctrine throughly imbib'd, our curious arts, περίεργα γράμματα, *superfluous unconcerned studies*, would as it happened *Acts* 19. be supplanted; and our *devotion* if sufficiently accended, would, as theirs, *burn up* innumerable *books* of this sort. And sure as this would be the *greatest*, so it would be the most *triumphant bonfire* Christendom ever saw, as being not only an *indication*, but a *means* of the *mighty growth*, and prevailing of the word of God, which our vain *curiosities* serve only to impede and obstruct, while they do as mightily advance *dissentions* and *animosities* amongst men.

CHAP. XV.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Thirdly, Interest.

Self Interest is a third cause of our Divisions.

1. BUT besides these *two*, there is a *third* fomenter of divisions, which either for its activity or success must not subscribe to either of them, and that is *interest*. This is the great *idol* to which the world bows: To this we pay our devoutest homage, give it not only our *knees*, but our *hearts*; and as if the making us rich were a *second* creation, that could cancel all the obligations of the *first*, we sacrilegiously entitle our profit to all the prerogatives of a creator, give it an absolute unlimited dominion over us, allow it to prescribe us all our measures of good and evil; to rule not only our *reason* but our *passions* too, (a sovereignty, alas! we would never yield to our God) and as if the giving us *laws* were not empire enough, we permit it to impose *religions* also; for sure they that observe how great an influence it has in *Church-affairs*, will conclude it governs more than the *secular* part of the world. And indeed if we look back, we shall find 'tis no *novel usurpation*, but though void of other title, has the prescription of *many ages*. Divinity has long since been made the handmaid of policy, and religions modelled by conveniencies of state. The golden *Calves* became vene-

rable *deities*, when they were found apt to secure *Jeroboam*'s jealousies: And *Machiavel*'s policy, That *states should serve themselves of religion*, was a common practice long before 'twas his rule. And this example of communities has been transcrib'd by single persons. In the Old Testament we find frequent mention of those *mercenary* prophets, that turn'd the *office* into a *trade*, divin'd for *money*, nay, sometimes for more contemptible hire, *handfuls of barley*, and *pieces of bread*: And in the New we see the same motive of secular advantage had force enough to turn an *ecclesiastick* into a *laick*, make *Demas* degrade himself, and desert his ministry, and as it thus stopt his mouth from preaching the *truth*, so it open'd those of others to divulge *errors*. Such were those deceivers of whom St. *Paul* speaks, *Tit.* 1. 11. *Who spake things they ought not for filthy lucre's sake.* So when the same Apostle declaims the most earnestly against the *love of money as the root of all evil*, we find he fetches his proof of that charge from its having *made men err from the faith*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 10. And 'tis St. *Peter*'s prediction, that the most damnable heresies, even the *denying of the Lord that bought them*, should be introduced by *those*, who through covetousness should make *merchandize of* their *proselytes*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 4. and sure the *event* attests the *presage* to have concern'd more than the age immediately succeeding, there being none of the subsequent which hath not in some degree assisted its completion; nor have we cause to wonder *hereat*, since 'tis obvious to discern the conjunction and dependence between covetousness and heresie. For the *itching ears*, the Apostle speaks of, being an *epidemick disease*, give fair opportunity to every *mountebank* to try his *experiments*. When men nauseate *old* truths, because they are acquainted with them, and embrace doctrines for the very same reason they should reject them, even because they are *new*; when they love no teachers, but such as thus entertain them, and are bountiful to none but such as they love, there is little doubt, but there will be *mints* enough set on work, when the *coiners* can thus at once *stamp new opinions* for their disciples, and *money* for themselves; and God knows they are not a *few* of our divisions, that have thence taken *birth*. It will be needless to ravel far into the records of elder times, every man's memory will be able to suggest to him too many, and too pertinent instances. Upon which reflection 'twill be too visible, that much of some mens late pretence to *godliness* was but a real pursuit of *gain*; and the *new light* serv'd to guide them to their *neighbours coffers*: And probably many of our Disputes had been superseded, had not the authors foreseen, that though they lost the question, they should gain what they more sought. A few essays had discover'd how much the *populacy* were pleas'd with *novelties*, especially such as at once gratified their *levity* and their *pride*, by casting ill reflections on the things or persons to whom they owned a reverence; and the *liberal contributions* such teachers met with, serv'd still to invite more *labourers* into that *work*, where without the uneasiness of a long expectation, their very *seed time* was their *harvest*, and by sowing *tares* they immediately reaped *gold*: And 'tis no wonder if such *quick returns* made them *diligent* at the trade, industrious to provide those wares they saw they could put off so well. And would to God we were secure, that *this way* of traffick were yet at an end; for so long as these *spiritual merchants* can thus impose on their *credulous chapmen*, make them buy one mischief with another, and exhaust their *estates* to endanger their *souls*, we must not hope our *dissentions* will ever cease, our *flames* ever be extinct, that have so much *matter* to feed them, and such *importunate blasts* to blow them up.

The contentions about Religion are in a great measure kept up and promoted through Covetousness;

2. But *covetousness* is of too unsatiable a nature to be contented with one way of supply, 'tis like the *sea*, that receives the tribute of *all rivers* (though far unlike it in lending any back again) and therefore those who have resolv'd upon the *thriving sort* of piety, have seldom embarkt all their *hopes* in one *bottom*, nor so depended on the *bounty* of their proselytes, as to neglect other *ways of preying* for themselves. They wanted not providence to foresee, how uncertain a revenue popular benevolence is; that the same giddy and violent *humour*, which had opened their hands *so wide*, might by working another way close them *as fast*; or if their *inclinations* continued, their *abilities* might fail; (a thing very possible to those who have such suckers) or if both these remain'd, yet that they were unlikely to grow in proportion to their own appetites, and therefore found it necessary to have some other refuge: And besides this way of *flattering* their willing *benefactors* out of part, contriv'd another of *forcing* their unwilling neighbours out of all their *possessions*; so making the spoils of some mens *honesty* a richer booty than that of others *folly*. Hence *Shiboleths* found out of covenants and engagements, to give opportunity of destroying a dissenting brother; by this art a *fat benefice* became *crime* and *witness* too against its incumbent, and he was sure to be *unorthodox*, that was worth the *plundering*. Thus alas! has the *altar* of God

been

been attended, or rather invaded by those whose very *approach* was a *guilt*, that qualified them rather to lay hold on its *horns*, than pretend to its *service*; for sure that God, who has declar'd he hates *robbery* for *burnt-offering*, cannot much affect *robbers* for *priests*. But this is a theme so unpleasant, I delight not to enlarge on it, and rather wish that the memory of it were so extinct, that it might remain no where but in the penitential Litanies of the offenders; my design in the present reflection is only to make it an evidence how much *covetousness* promotes our *contentions*, which sure is not more visible any where than in this instance; for where there is a design of supplanting, that necessarily requires another of accusing; (even *Jezebel* her self projects not to seize on *Naboth*'s vineyard without a precedent *charge*) to comply with which necessity, not only the *lives* and *conversations*, but the *doctrines* and *opinions* of our most eminent divines have been strangely misrepresented, and when that proved not *fence* enough to the *reputation* of their oppressors, they have thought fit to change the *scene*, and to combate those *opinions* in their *true shape*, upon which they could not so well fasten their *disguise*. I shall not here need to say with how much, or how little pretext of reason they manag'd those Disputes: 'Tis enough to my purpose that such Disputes there were, and those founded in the desire of acquiring secular advantages, which sufficiently attests *interest* to be a potent *abettor* of our quarrels.

which appears in the disturbances given the Church by Anabaptists abroad.

3. But God knows that is a truth of which the *world* affords so many proofs, that we need not confine our selves to this little *angle* of it, or owe our *convictions* only to our *domestick transactions*; if we look abroad, we shall find it too often exemplified. The memorable *disturbance* given to the Church as well as state of *Germany* by the *Anabaptists*, is a pregnant instance; whose *new opinion* was but an expedient of investing themselves in *new possessions*, and their *second Baptism* but the solemnity of espousing, not only the *flesh*, but the *world* also, which they had renounced in the *first*.

The opinions of many of our Sects are wholly subservient to their worldly interest.

4. And would God they had been the only sect of men, whose *doctrines* were subservient to their *interests*; for such tumultuous and *plebeian projects*, though like a *land-flood* they make great spoil at the present, yet soon sink again. Such avowed and *excessive greediness* devours *it self*, and the *instruments* by which it wrought: So that the *defeat* of the secular design is commonly the *routing* those opinions, which were formed for the promoting it. But when the same desire has the advantage of a sober guidance; when *avarice* puts on the *canonical habit*, and twists it self not only with the *practice* of men, but the *doctrines* of the Church; when *articles* of religion shall be estimated by their *profitableness*, and ecclesiasticks *dispute* as lay-men *fight*, *for money*; then alas! the *mischief* seems fatal, the *disease* so fixt and radicated, as at once discourages, and mocks the attempts of *cure*.

The Religion of the Romish Church is chiefly calculated for the ends of Covetousness and Ambition,

5. That this is the case, not only in a *particular* and *private* Church, but that which assumes to be the *universal* and *catholick*, is too apparent. The one position of the Pope's right to dispose kingdoms, out-strips all other principles of rapine: This is to drive a *whole-sale* trade, when all other petty merchants deal but for *parcels*; which as it is much *bolder*, so is it a more *prejudicial* attempt than the invading of private possessions, and these *duo gladii*, the double armature of St. *Peter*, a more destructive engine than the tumultuary weapon snatcht up by a *fanatick*; but sure St. *Peter*'s *sword*, though once rashly manag'd by himself, was never design'd to arm his *successors* to invade kingdoms: This *property* of it seems rather to have been deriv'd from the *prætorian souldiers*, who insolently assumed the disposing of the empire, wherein they at the last arrived to that *impudence*, that after the death of *Pertinax* they made *open port-sale* of it, αἰσχρῶς ϗ ἀτίμως, ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ ἰδιωτικῷ καπηλίων, *in a base and sordid manner, as if it had been of common marketable wares*: I cannot say the court of *Rome* transcribes that indecent owning of the traffick, but it has in other instances so well attested its good managery, that 'tis not very credible, that crowns and scepters are conferred *gratis*. And to *this* so advantageous a doctrine *others* bear proportion: Those of *purgatory*, *indulgences*, and *supererogation*, are ready instances, wherein the *assertors* themselves seem to be unanimous in nothing but in a joynt reference to profit; for when they come to minute definitions, they vary and disagree, satisfie one another, as little as their common *antagonists*: And therefore in the council of *Trent* they prudently chose in their decrees to propose the bare *articles* backt by the authority of the Church, and *Anathema's* of the council, as having by precedent *discussions* of the points in their congregations discern'd the small *accord* that was among themselves, when they descended to *particulars*. And indeed the *opinions* were so various as to the grounds of the doctrines, that one would wonder how from so differing *premisses*, they should all infer the same *conclusion*; were it not that the *con-*

spiration

ſpiration of intereſt was too potent for the *diverſity* of judgment. And ſure 'twas a ſtrange deference was given to it, when in the matter of *indulgences* there was (by the teſtimony of their own writers) four *different* opinions, and yet all *Catholick*; which moderation towards *ſpeculative* diſſenters, compar'd with the great ſeverity againſt thoſe that oppoſed its *practice*, ſpeaks loud enough that the *orthodoxy* of the point lay wholly in the *profitableneſs*; and that *Luther* himſelf had been no *Heretick*, had he buſied himſelf only in ſuch diſquiſitions as impeded not the *gain* of that doctrine. Nor is this merely ſurmiſe and conjecture, for if we conſult the *memorials* of thoſe tranſactions, we ſhall find *this* was the thing that moſt alarm'd *Rome*, put that court in almoſt as great a *commotion*, as the *birth* of Chriſt did *Herod*'s: And accordingly in their private conſults, the cloſer *cabals* of the college, the *ſecuring* this part of their invaded treaſure was the grand *deliberation*; upon which account it was, that when *Adrian* ſhewed ſome inclination to the reforming abuſes both in this and other inſtances, one of his *Cardinals*, who better knew the intrigues of affairs, admoniſht him againſt that unskilful piece of *ingenuity*, not only from the example of his *predeceſſors*, who were reſolute never to confeſs faults by *mending* them, but by *repreſenting* to him, " That no *reformation* could be made, which would not notably diminiſh the *rents* of " the Church, which having four foundations, the one *temporal*, the other three *ſpiritual*, *indulgences*, *diſpenſations*, and collations of *benefices*; no one of them could " be ſtopped, but that one quarter of the revenues would be cut off." What a reſemblance this advice carries to the oration of *Demetrius* to his fellow crafts-men, *Acts* 19. 25. I need not ſtand to demonſtrate; but while ſuch conſiderations as this, bear ſway in Church matters, where *profit* ſhall be the *touch-ſtone* both for faith and manners, we are not to wonder if no *gainful tenet* be depoſited; or *peace* bought with that which in moſt mens eſteem is of far more value.

which renders the differences between her and us irreconcileable.

6. And this is it which ominates ſadly as to our diviſions with the *Romaniſts*; were our *differences* merely the product of heat and paſſion, they would like the *ſmaller clefts* in the ground, want nothing but a *cooler ſeaſon* to cement and cloſe them: But when they are thus form'd into an *intereſt*, become the deſign not of *ſingle perſons* or *ages*, but of *corporations* and *ſucceſſions*; the breach ſeems like the *ſciſſures* and *ruptures* of an earthquake, and threatens to ſwallow all that attempt to cloſe it, and reſerves its cure only for omnipotence. Indeed till *ſpiritual* and *ſecular* concerns be reduced into their proper ranks, which are now mixt and confounded, the better to diſguiſe the prepoſterous ſubordination of the nobler to the inferiour; 'till we have forgotten the unhappy *Chymiſtry* of turning *all*, even *Religion* it ſelf, *into gold*, we muſt never hope to get out of the *furnace*; our *flames* will ſtill grow fiercer, and with this unnatural *effect*, to conſume not the *droſs*, but the purer *metal*. In a word, till men can ſever themſelves from their *avarice* and mean purſuits of gain, they will never ceaſe to ſeparate from their *brethren*. For as the moſt *ſovereign balſams* cannot cure a hurt, while the *arrow* remains in the fleſh; ſo neither can the moſt *pacifick remedies* at all avail, ſo long as the ſame *worldly aims*, which made the wound, ſtill ſtick in it.

The ſacrilegious ſpoils of our Church is owing to the covetouſneſs of our late Reformers.

7. But in the mean time 'tis a *melancholick* conſideration, that Chriſtianity ſhould be by it profeſſors thus unworthily proſtituted; that the many various and oppoſite religions, for which we ſeverally pretend ſo much zeal, ſhould be but divers ways to the ſame irreligious end; wherein our *Elders* ſeem to reſemble thoſe in the ſtory of *Suſanna*, who when they meant to *part* with each other, yet did unawares meet by the impulſe of the ſame luſt. We find it moved the *patience* even of the *Lamb of God*, to ſee his Father's *houſe* made a *houſe* of *merchandize*, though the traffick was for the furniſhing of ſacrifices: With what abhorrence muſt we think does he now behold thoſe, who drive ſo much a worſe trade in it; who ſell not *accommodations* for worſhip, but the *worſhip* it ſelf to accommodate their *intereſts*, and do not only make gain *in* the temple, but *of* it? A thing the ſacrilegious rapine of our days has made literally true, where beſides the *revenues*, the very *fabrick* and *materials* of Churches have been *marketable ware*: *Judas*'s good husbandry has been taken up, and *Ad quid perditio hæc?* put as the *common motto* upon every thing that could be ſold for *more*, nay ſometimes for *leſs* than *three hundred pence*. And as *Dionyſius* took away the golden beard from *Æſculapius*, to rectifie the indecency of the ſon's having a beard, when the father had none; and *Julian* robb'd the Chriſtian altars with this *impious ſarcaſm*, ἐν ποίοις σκεύεσιν ὑπηρετεῖ ὁ Μαρίας υἱός; that *'twas unfit the ſon of Mary ſhould be ſerv'd in plate*. So do men now a days make themſelves *regulators* of holy things, correct the *indecorums* of the ſanctuary, that they may rifle its *treaſures*. Thus do we ſee the Apoſtle's affirmation ſadly verified, That *thoſe who will be rich fall into temptation, and a ſnare*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 9. Such is the greedineſs of a *covetous*

appetite, that it swallows indiscriminately whatever looks like *prize*, and rather than it want its prey, God *himself* shall be *robb'd*. Nay, 'twere to be wisht in this instance, that that were all; but alas! he is *mockt* too, used not only *unjustly*, but *contumeliously*; we thus make him a property to our sordid designs, and when he has profest that he will not be serv'd together with *Mammon*, we attempt that which is yet far more blasphemous, and make Him pay service to him with whom he disdains to share it when paid by others.

8. Neither is covetousness the only *vice* that serves its Interest upon religion; but as 'tis made a *factor* for that, so it is a *cloak* and *disguise* for many other. Of this the catalogues of primitive *hereticks* give sufficient witness; divers whereof, as the *Nicolaitans*, *Cerinthians*, *Carpocratians*, and *Gnosticks*, seem to have constituted distinct sects in *Christianity*, only that they might introduce the most bestial parts of *Heathenism*, and pretend an association in *religion*, when indeed it was in *lust*. How far some of our modern sects resemble them in this particular, I will not undertake to pronounce; though there want not those who make *severe*, and not *improbable* conjectures concerning it. But whether that be the main design, or no; 'tis certain both that wickedness, and many other find great shelter among them. He that brings *resolution* to uphold a faction, shall not miss of *entertainment*, how many or how great vices soever he brings with it; and *he* that is of a *godly party* shall, in spight of the loudest guilts, be a *godly man*. So *meritorious* a thing is it in some mens account to be *factious*, that *it covers the multitude of sins*: Hence it is that *criminals* so frequently fly to new Churches for *sanctuary*: And 'twill still be the concern of such to have so creditable a *refuge*; and therefore we are not to wonder if *this* Interest combine with the *former* in promoting our dissentions.

Religion is too commonly made use of to serve a base Lust and vile End;

9. But alas! as it advances *those*, so does it our *guilt* too, that have more than one vile end to which we accommodate our piety; and still implies the greater *affront* to our God, by how many the more and baser *Interests* we shroud under his patronage. Alas! is it not enough, as *Job* speaks, *to hide our iniquities in our bosoms*, but must we wrap them in the *veil* of the *Sanctuary?* We read that *goats* once lent a *covering* for the tabernacle; but here by an impious inversion, the *tabernacle* must lend a *covering* to the goats; the most *bestial appetites* be both concealed and preserved under the *shadow* of religion. *Plutarch* tells us, that when *Marcellus* would have consecrated a *temple* joyntly to Honour and Virtue, the *priests* resisted it, saying, *two gods dwelt not in one Church*: And if their *vain deities* exacted such a solemnity of respect, and would not be inmates to *one another*, can we think the *true God* will be content to be made so to all our *vilest lusts?* This is sure the highest contumely to the divine Majesty; and never could the *abomination of desolation* more properly be said to stand in the *holy place*, than in *this sense*: For as the *natures* of these guilts are fitly exprest by *abomination*, so is the *effect* of them by *desolation*; they having brought the most *fatal mischiefs* on the Church.

10. And now, would God all that are concern'd in this guilt, would soberly ponder the weight of it. There are *two things* of which God has exprest himself peculiarly tender, his *honour*, and his *Church*; this is the invading him in both; the exposing the *one* to reproach and contempt, and the *other* to ruin and destruction; and doubtless were there nothing of the *former*, this *latter* alone must be sadly accounted for. It remains yet a character of infamy upon *Achan*, that he troubled *Israel* to enrich himself: and on *Balaam*, that *he not only loved the wages of iniquity*, but *ensnared the people in uncleanness*: And sure the same with many aggravations belongs to those, who by the like unworthy practice, have not only rendred the Church a prey to *foreigners*, but made it so to *it self*; engag'd one part of it against another, till the whole is so wasted, that our *religion* seems now nearer extinction, than our *quarrels* about it.

The Guilt whereof ought seriously to be weighed and pondered by us all.

CHAP. XVI.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Fourthly, Passion.

1. A Fourth grand contributer to our dissentions is *Passion*, which being by God and nature placed in a subserviency to reason, when it quits its *proper station*, and assumes *empire*, it must needs disorder and subvert not only the state of the *mind*, but

Passion a fourth cause of our Divisions.

but of *every thing* upon which it has an influence. I shall not here attempt any *philosophical* discourse either of their *nature*, or *number*; all that concerns the present enquiry falls under one of these two, our *love*, or our *hate*; and is either kindness and prepossession, or spight and prejudice. For the *first* of these, 'tis a thing which *common experience* attests to be a most forcible corrupter of the understanding, which being by native right design'd a *Judge*, is by this interrupted in its *office*, not permitted to make those impartial enquiries, on which a right *sentence* should be founded: But (as it fares sometimes with *magistrates* in popular insurrections) forced to give countenance to its own *violation*, to own not its proper native dictates, but such as are presented to it by the prejudicate fancy. And as it thus lays restraint upon the *superior* part of the mind, keeps the understanding in fetters, so (to complete the inversion) it takes off all ties from the *inferior*; gives not only *licence*, but *incitation* to the other Passions to take their freest range, to act with the utmost impetuosity. And sure there can nothing more be requir'd, to render it a most apt *instrument* of tumult and confusion. For when every *opinion* that is taken up, shall, instead of *reason* and *argument*, arm it self with *heat* and *violence*, there can be no end of contending. And the truth of this is, God knows, too sadly discernible in our *Church controversies*, which derive a great deal of their *warmth* and *bitterness* from this fountain.

Prepossession and Kindness to Mens Persons and Doctrines hath given countenance to many antient Errors.

2. Of this prepossession there are two sorts, the one relating to *doctrine*, the other to *persons*; by the first, I mean not a sober constancy to those principles, which being first imbibed by *education*, are afterwards retain'd upon *judgment*, but an eager *tenacity* of opinions, not so much upon *truth* or *evidence*, as upon a confus'd irrational *kindness*; a *Platonick love* of some doctrines merely for themselves, and then making them the *standards* by which all others are to be measured: And this kind of prepossession is no stranger in the world, there being multitudes of men, who assert opinions with all imaginable vehemence, who can give no better ground of it, but because they like them: And as the wiser sort *choose* a tenet, because 'tis *right*; so these conclude 'tis *right*, because they have *chosen* it. And having thus enamour'd themselves of their *Helena*, they expect all should adore, nor can he escape the note of profaneness that refuses. By this absurd partiality it is, that some *doctrines*, which would themselves ill abide the *test*, are become the *touchstone* both of doctrines and men, and no opinion or person sanctified, which bears not this impress. I need not stand to give instances, either of the *doctrines*, or the unhappy *influence* this espousing of them has had on our dissentions; but indeed this kind of *prepossession* is oftentimes the *consequent* of another; and this great *veneration* of some opinions is founded in the *reverence* of their authors. Men take up a confidence of the *learning* or *sanctity* of a person, and then all his *notions* are received implicitly, strictly embraced, but not so much as slightly examined; and this *admiration* of mens persons has in all ages been of huge *mischief* to the Church, has nurst up *private* fancies into solemn *publick* errors, and given an unhappy perpetuity to many *heterodox opinions*, which would else have expired with their *first propugners*. This seems to have been foreseen by St. *Paul*, when he so earnestly exhorts the *Corinthians*, against the ascribing their *faith* to their several respective *teachers*: But sure I am, 'twas sadly experimented by the *succeeding Christians*, who owed many of their *divisions* to it. A pregnant instance hereof was the *Millennium*, which in spight of its improbability prevail'd *long*, and almost *universally* against the *truth*, upon the strength of *authority*. *Papias*, a holy man, and scholar of St. *John*, having delivered it, the *esteem* of his person canoniz'd his *mistake*, and men chose rather to admit a *doctrine*, whose unagreeableness to the Gospel œconomy rendred it suspicious, than think an *apostolick man* could seduce them. And the force of this is yet more considerable, when 'tis remembred that it found *proselytes*, not only among the *vulgar*, who are commonly flexible to any new impression, but among those of a *higher rank*, men that were *lights* in their generation: *Justin Martyr* and *Irenæus* having own'd the *opinion*, and intimated it to have been received by many others no less *orthodox*; and if such a seduction could prevail so early in those purer times, before mens interests or spleen were adopted into their religion, and begot voluntary errors, if, I say, the *mere reputation* of a teacher was then singly so operative, we cannot wonder at its efficacy in conjunction with those *auxiliaries*, which worser times have brought in. What concurrence of those there was in the several *heresies* which after infested the *Church*, I shall not now examine, but 'tis visible that many of them grew considerable, chiefly from the *fame* of their authors; thus *Tatianus* upon the credit of being *Justin Martyr*'s disciple, had an advantage to disseminate his errors; and not only his, but those of *Origen*; *Apollinaris*, and *Novatus* gain'd abettors from the *reputed orthodoxy* of the persons that propos'd

them,

them, who having asserted the faith in *some* points, were qualified the more prosperously to oppose it in *others*.

3. Nor has it been only the mishap of elder times, to have felt the mischiefs of such prepossession; the *disease* has still advanced, and every day improved in worse *effects*, by how much men have more degenerated from *primitive integrity*; so that the *easie proselyte* is now in danger, not only from the *blindness*, but the *treachery* of his guide, and is often led out of the *common road*, as *thieves* draw passengers into *by-ways*, for the better opportunity of robbing them: But 'tis not my present business to send *hue and cry* after them, to examine what the intentions of those *leaders* are, who misguide their tractable admiring *followers*; 'tis enough for my purpose to observe, that those who so deliver up themselves in a blind assent to the dictates of any man, are in his power to be abused by him, if he pleases; I shall leave it to others, to estimate the *probability* that they shall not be actually so; but certainly this may be said, that these *later* ages have beyond all the *former* given opportunities of seducing to any that will use them. The one establish'd doctrine of *infallibility* among the *Romanists* is eminent for its propriety that way, while under pretence of *submission* to something they call *infallible*, 'tis evident that the *faith* of the ignorant vulgar resolves it self into that which they acknowledge most *fallible*; the doctrine of their immediate teachers. But indeed take it at the best, such a *persuasion* is not only an *error* in it self, and an apt *foundation* for innumerable others, but it necessarily renders them incorrigible; the least retractation of a *mistake* being so inconsistent with the claim of *infallibility*, that while they retain the *one*, they must never attempt the *other*, nor can they cease to err, till they confess it possible they may do so. How much more than possible that has been, the many innovations of that Church sufficiently witness; and consequently the danger of presuming upon the unerrableness of a guide. But would all that *upbraid* it there, were themselves *secure* from it, and that many did not in their practice transcribe that *decryed doctrine*, and that too with the improvement of worse *circumstances*. I must call them *worse*, by how much the *probabilities* of erring are *greater*, under the extemporary conduct of a *private person*; than the fixt rules of a *community*, and by how much again the voluntary enslaving my self is more excuseless, than that which the principles of my profession, and consequently a seeming obligation of conscience exposes me to. And as to the matter of fact, I think 'tis evident enough, that the *admiration* of mens persons is a *spreading disease* that has over-run Christendom: and though a great part of it inveigh against *implicit faith*, yet if it be throughly scann'd, 'twill appear, 'tis rather the *object* than the *act* we differ about. He that vehemently opposes that homage to the *conclave*, will yet tamely pay it to a *classis*: And he that refuses it there, yields it to the votes of a *congregational Church*; or if he hold out against that too, yet chooses to himself some *private teacher* on which to cast it: Like *Micah*, Judg. 16. *Makes him a teraphim and a priest too, for his private use*; and then confidently consults his *oracle*, and has nothing to do but believe its *responses*. Nay, that which makes the matter yet more sadly ridiculous is, that the very opposition to *one* usurpation makes them deliver themselves up to *another*. How many, when they have heard a *preacher* rail fiercely at the *Pope*, have presently made him *theirs*, and supposing that zeal an *indication of a safe guide*, have given him as *absolute a rule* of their consciences, as that he exclaim'd against (perhaps envied) elsewhere? And the like instances might be given among our other dissenting parties. And this has taught some seducers a lucky artifice, made them observe to what opinions their proselytes had the greatest aversion, and by complying with their *anger* so steal away their *love*, that they might after lead them to what they *pleas'd*, yea, perhaps to that which they so much detested: For there want not examples of some, who have by back ways been brought to those opinions, which at first they most defied. What have been the *attempts* or *success* of the emissaries of *Rome* this way, I shall not pronounce, though some (not improbably) speak them *great*.

Many blindly give up their faith and conscience to the conduct of their admired teachers.

4. From this blind and passionate *esteem* of several teachers, have flowed many *pernicious consequents*, particularly those distinct appellations, which form *differences* into *sects*, many of which expresly own *this original*, by bearing the names of their *first authors*. I might here put them in mind, that they are *illegitimate persons*, whom our law directs to write with an *alias*, and ask them, *Whether the Church from their superinduced name, has not cause so to repute them.* But I am sure I may with the utmost seriousness say, that this *practice* is to the great *violation* of Christian unity, and *reproach* of Christian profession, which seems to be abandoned and disowned by us, who instead of denominating our selves from *the author and finisher of our faith*, find out

and choose to denominate themselves from the name of a particular sect, as if they were ashamed of that of Christian.

new patrons, as if we were ashamed of our *first relation*. Alas! how is the title of *Christian*, which was so *glorious* to the *primitive owners*, that they gladly bought the occasion of boasting it with torments and death, become so *despicable* to *us*, that every the obscurest name is courted to supplant it! Have any of our *idoliz'd readers* bought their interest in us so dear as *Christ* has done, why then are we rather ambitious to be accounted their *dependents*, than *his*? 'Tis the *Apostle*'s own argument, 1 *Cor*. 1. 12. when he refutes their factious entituling themselves to *Paul* and *Apollos*, &c. by asking them, if *Paul* were crucified for them: And indeed he there says so much upon this point, that I need only refer the reader thither to learn either the *unreasonableness* of this schismatical zeal for our several teachers, or the *inevitable contentions* and *animosities* which spring from it; only let me observe, that every of his arguments are more pressing upon *us*, than on the *Corinthians*; those taken from the unreasonableness sure are, by how much the *names* we so adore are less venerable than those of *Paul* and *Cephas* and *Apollos*; and those from the consequences are so also. For those teachers were industrious to *prevent*, whereas ours commonly are no less busie to *promote contentions* on their behalf, and so we are more ascertain'd never to want them.

Prejudice and dislike hath likewise given birth to many heresies in the Church,

5. But beside this *kinder* prepossession towards some mens persons, there is another of a different nature, a *sinister* one; I mean *prejudice* and *disgust*; and *this* has done no less harm in ecclesiastical affairs than the *former*. Men take up *piques* and *displeasures* at others, and then every *opinion* of the disliked person must partake of his *fate*, and be engaged in the *quarrel*; nor will those that are enemies ever allow one another the honour of being in the right; nay, some have been so perversly *malicious*, that they have given up their *understandings* to their *spleen*, forsaken an opinion themselves approved, only that they might find matter of contest with one they maligned. A memorable instance of this *Socrates* gives in his *Eccl. Hist.* in *Theophilus* bishop of *Alexandria*, who having formerly attested the orthodox belief, that God was incorporeal; yet upon a sudden indignation against *Dioscorus* and his brethren, who maintained the tenet, he embraced the contrary heresie of the *Anthropomorphites*, that so under the colour of a difference in *faith*, he might the more advantageously pursue his *malice*, and the effects of it were very tragical, not only to *private persons* in tumult and blood-shed, but to the *Church*, by reviving that error, which was before near expiring, and might as *Socrates* affirms, have lain in the dust, had it not been thus awaken'd. And indeed in Church story scarce any thing occurs more frequently than examples of those, who upon private grudges have either begun or fomented heresies and schisms. Thus *Marcion* being denied the communion of the *Roman* church, having before by a *scandalous crime* been cut off from his own, he reveng'd himself by publishing his *detestable doctrine*: In like manner *Meletius* upon a displeasure at *Peter* bishop of *Alexandria*, first separated from the *Church*, and after took part with the *Arians*: So also *Lucifer* incensed at *Eusebius*, for not approving of his electing *Paulus* to the see of *Antioch*, broke communion, and gave both rise and denomination to a new *sect*. The like is said of *Apolinaris*, that he was excited to the broaching his *heresie* by his impatience of the excommunication inflicted on him and his father, by *Theodotus* bishop of *Laodicea*; and several others might be given to the same purpose, out of the records of those first ages.

and hath mightily inflam'd our present differences and dissentions.

6. And certainly the world seems not to have so much improved in *meekness* since, as that we should think the same *principle* is not still as *active*; and if the task were not more envious than hard, many recent instances might be given to parallel the former, especially of such as having justly smarted *under* the stroke of *ecclesiastical discipline*, have sought to revenge themselves both *on it* and the *inflictors*, by factions and tumults; so making the *publick* at once cloak the infamy, and bear the charge of their *particular* rancours. But this is a subject neither grateful nor necessary to be more distinctly spoken to. One may however in the general say, that where these private animosities are any thing *violent*, they usually beat down all consideration of *publick good*. *Historians* observe of *Themistocles*, that he always thwarted the counsels of *Aristides*, not that he thought it the interest of the *commonwealth*, but *his own*, to keep down the growing reputation of his competitor: And I fear that envious artifice has been too often transcrib'd, as well in *ecclesiastick*, as in *civil* transactions: No *detriment* is thought so formidable to a malicious mind, as the *prosperity* of his adversary; and publick ruptures shall still be allowed to widen, till they swallow up the whole, rather than he will close with his antagonist. The history of the *Scottish Church* gives an appesite example of this in a *ruling presbyter*, who being by king *James* advis'd with about the re-admitting marquis *Huntley*, and prest with the present exigencies of Church and state, which requir'd it, gave his *final answer* in these terms, *Well, sir, I see you*

you resolve to take Huntley *in favour; if you do, I will oppose it, choose whether you will lose him, or me, for both you cannot have.* Some may think the greatest propriety of this instance lies to shew the *insolence* of that tribe towards *majesty;* but however 'tis not impertinent to the matter in hand also; and shews how light the greatest *publick concerns* are, when *malice* is the counterpoize: And indeed the *naturalists* experiment, that *flame* will not mingle with *flame,* never justifies it self better than when applied to minds thus accended, which, however they may meet in mutual flashes, can never *unite* and *incorporate:* The sadness of it is, that they should only conspire to *common vastation,* and make the Church it self a *burnt-offering.*

7. Thus fatal have our several sorts of prepossessions been to our religion, for as if that were the *common enemy,* our most distant contrary affections, our *love* and our *hate* equally annoy it; those brutish parts of us, our *Passions,* which, like the *beasts* under the law, were never to be brought into the *temple,* but for *sacrifice,* are *now* found there upon a far differing account, not to be *slain,* but *ador'd;* like the *Egyptian Isis* and *Osyris,* enshrin'd to receive our *devotions;* for that the zeal we pretend elsewhere is really paid to them, is, alas! too manifest. *Our Passions have been fatal both to our Church and Religion.*

CHAP. XVII.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Fifthly, Zeal.

1. TO these several causes of our distractions we may add another, which though in its *original* it may seem more *innocent,* yet is in its *consequents* no less *pernicious,* and that is a *mistaken Zeal;* which, as it is *fire* to all about it, so is it *wind* to it self, fans and irritates its own *flames,* and by a confidence that it does *well,* gathers still fresh vigour to do *more.* How great the force of such an erroneous persuasion is, we may collect from our Saviour's premonition to his Discsiples, when he tells them, that *those who kill'd them, should think they did God service;* and if *murder* and that of *Apostles* too, could by the *magick* of blind Zeal be so transform'd, we must not wonder to find other *crimes* so to. And what *Christ* thus foretold was after eminently exemplified in St. *Paul,* whom the Holy Writ represents under all the phrases that may denote a virulent *persecutor,* as breathing out *threatnings* and *slaughter,* making havock of the Church, and in his own words, *Persecuting that way unto the death,* and being exceedingly mad against them; and all this he did being zealous towards God, and out of a *persuasion* that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of *Jesus,* as we find in his apology to his country-men and king *Agrippa, Acts* 22. 2. and 26. 9. *Mistaken Zeal hath been another cause of our breaches and divisions,*

2. And of the abettors of those novel doctrines which after-times produced, we have reason to think many were of this sort, especially in those heresies, which though they carried *secret venom* in them, had yet a *plausible appearance* of sanctity and devotion; such was that of the *Encratites,* which seem'd to be founded in the veneration of two great virtues, *continence* and *temperance,* though by extending them beyond the due limits, they lost that *sobriety* they too strictly embraced, and became *inordinate* in their continence, and *excessive* in their abstinence: Such again were the *Euchitæ* or *Messalians,* who made the whole business not only of *religion,* but even of *life* to consist *in praying;* and though by it they evacuated all other ends of both, yet having the *letter* of a precept, and the *pretence* of devotion on their side, 'twas a *proper bait* for those who had *much* Zeal and *little* knowledge. In like manner the *Novatians* heresie had so glorious an inscription of purity, as was very apt to attract well meaning souls; who seeing it bid such express *defiance to apostasie,* could not suspect that it was it self any *defection from the faith;* and accordingly some of that sect approved their constancy in times both of *Heathen* and *Arian* persecutions. Nor must we be so uncharitable to the modern times, as not to believe many have acted upon the like principles, and meant truth and piety, even while they actually promoted the contrary. But how sincere soever the *purposes* of such seduced persons were, yet 'tis evident the Church has suffered no less by *them,* than by the *more crafty designers:* their *misguided piety* has made as great and incurable ruptures, as the most *flagitious blasphemies* of others. And when a *rent* is once made, it matters little, whether it were done by *error,* or *malice;* nay, perhaps as to the hopes of repairing, the former may be the more desperate: For whereas *he* that knowingly *commits* an ill, has the *upbraidings* of his own *and lead to several extravagant pieces of superstition.*

conscience towards his reducing; these on the other side have its *cherishings* and *encouragements* to confirm and animate them. And doubtless they are great advantages which *Satan* has in all ages made of such persons, whom he seems to have deluded in the same manner, that **Medea** is said to have done the daughters of *Peleas*, whom she perswaded to hack their *aged father* in pieces, in hope that by her *magick* he should not only recover *life*, but *youth*: So these rend and tear their *mother* the Church out of a hope no less delusive, of restoring her *pristine beauty* and *vigour*; how far the event parallels it also, the dying state of *Christianity* does too sadly testifie.

Zeal in contending about the smaller matters in Religion, hath broken and disturb'd the Communion of the Church.

3. Nor has it only been the heat of *erring persons* that has been thus mischievous, but sometimes *men of right judgments* have too much contributed to the breach of unity, and the intemperate and imprudent *Zeal* of these hath serv'd to exasperate the mistaking *earnestness* of the other: This happens sometimes for want of distinguishing between the *essentials* and *circumstantials* of Religion, and so looking upon a mistake in the *latter* with the detestation proper only to the perverting of the *former*; by this means those who have entirely embraced the same *faith*, have yet violated *charity* and broken *communion*; such slight *minute differences*, when manag'd by eager spirits, being easily blown up into solemn and *lasting contentions*; so that the disputes rais'd about some *pin* or *nail* of the temple, have sometimes shaken and endanger'd the *whole fabrick*, robbed the Church of that fraternal unity which was its fastest cement, and surest support. Of this we need no more apt instance from antiquity, than that which has been already mentioned upon another occasion, I mean *Victor*'s unbrother-like heat towards the eastern Churches in the *controversie* about *Easter*, which had fomented that difference into a schism, which the meeker piety of his predecessors thought no ground of *unkindness*, much less of *separation*, as *Irenæus* more at large tells him; and probably had men in all the succeeding ages deliberately *poiz'd* the errors they oppos'd, and proportion'd their displeasure but to the *just weight* of them, many of our *disputes* would have been so calm'd, that they should never have become *quarrels*. But many in this particular have only us'd the *touch-stone*, not the *scales*: And of opinions that are erroneous, consider not which are more or less pernicious, but with an equal violence fly at all, as if the *Stoical* opinion concerning *sins* had prevail'd in *errors* also, and that all were resolv'd to be of the same size.

Several Errors and Heresies have been propagated by a too hot and eager contention about them.

4. But even in those of the highest kind it may perhaps be doubted, whether *too eager an opposition* have not sometimes done *hurt*, especially in those doctrines which relate to the *mysterious parts* of religion, wherein a *novelty* is at first lookt upon with some horror, and many are willing rather to *condemn* in gross, than nicely to *examine*: Who yet when they find this done for them by *orthodox persons*, they think they may with such a guide venture to wade into the question, where many times the *insinuations* of error are so subtil, that all their *antidotes* secure them not from *infection*, but they are themselves *captivated* where they expected only to *triumph*. Neither want there those of the *vulgar* that are of a more *insolent temper*, and out of a vanity of making themselves *umpires* between learned men, greedily read the writings of both parties, who yet are able to make no *solid judgment* of either; and when 'tis remembred how many *popular artifices* there are to byass such persons, we must confess that *truth* has many to one *odds* against her: Besides, *publick arguing* oft serves not only to exasperate the *minds*, but to whet the *wits* of *hereticks*, and by shewing them the *weak parts* of their doctrines, prompts them to rally all their *sophistry* to fortifie them, that what they want of *truth* and *reason*, may be supplied with *fallacy* and little colours; and experience shews how fitly that kind of *Logick* is accommodated to the greatest part of the world. In short, it seems not improbable, that many heresies owe much of their *growth* to the improper means of *eradicating* them; and have acquir'd a *reputation* from the *stir* that was made about them. Thus *Socrates* tells us, that *Alexander's* letters about the *Arian* heresie serv'd to scatter that pestilent infection the more abroad, and combin'd men into parties, so that the whole *world* became the *scene* of that long tragedy, which possibly might have had a shorter and better *issue*, had not the notice of the controversie been so early dispers'd.

to be propagated by arms, though the Zeal of the late Times did so;

5. But if the attempts of the *pen* have often proved so unfit, it may be consider'd whether those of the *sword* are not more so, and *fighting* be not a worse expedient than *disputing*; and certainly we have great reason to conclude in the affirmative, if we weigh either the injustice or unreasonableness of it. I know there want not those who have thought the propagating Religion by Arms, not only *lawful* but *meritorious*, and that in order to the *planting* it in a nation, the *soil* may be mellowed with the *blood* of the inhabitants; nay, the *old* extirpated, and *new* colonies planted. But we are to remember, that as God is the *universal monarch* of the world, so we have all

the

the relation of *fellow subjects* to him, and can pretend no farther jurisdiction over each other, than what he has delegated to us: And sure 'twould be hard to produce any commission from him for the invading a nation only because 'tis not of our faith. 'Tis sure, *those* to whom he first entrusted the promulgating of the Gospel, had far *different instructions*, and 'twere fit our *new Evangelists* should shew their *later authority* for this sanguinary method; in order to which, though some have made use of the *opinion* of some schoolmen, That *dominion is founded in grace*, yet as that is but an opinion, so were it admitted as the most certain truth, it could never warrant any enterprize of this kind; for supposing that a people by wanting *spiritual* blessings did lose all their right to *temporal*, yet that forfeiture must devolve only to the supreme Lord, and when, as God in another case asks, where is the *bill of divorce? Isay* 50. 1. so we may demand of these zealous invaders, where is the *bill of assignment*, by which that right was transferr'd to them? In short, *peace* is the most valuable blessing of humane life, and we cannot without injustice deprive men of it, though we could as we pretend, give them *truth* in lieu of it; for maugre the *Proverb*, That *exchange will still be robbery*, where the parties are compell'd to make it. But alas! 'tis a vain imagination to think that Religion can be thus impos'd; or that we can bind the *understandings* and *wills* of men, with the same fetters we do their *bodies*: 'Tis true indeed the Apostle tells us, *there is a way of bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*, but he tells us withal, that the *weapons*, by which that victory is atchieved, *are not carnal*, 2 *Cor.* 10. 4. Indeed did Religion consist only in some external *conformities*, external *force* might bear some proportion to it (which perhaps is the cause that the one is most us'd by those whose Religion is most eminent for the other) but 'tis seated in those *faculties* to which *outward violence* can have no access. Alas! 'tis not whole Armies can besiege my *reason*, nor cannons batter my *will*, 'tis *conviction*, not *force*, that must induce assent; and sure the *logick* of a conquering sword has no great propriety that way; *silence* indeed it may, but *convince* it cannot: Its efficacy rather lies on the other side, breeds aversion and abhorrence of that Religion, whose first address is in blood and rapine: Nor do such *attempts* gain any thing to the cause, but the *infamy* of those rigours which are us'd to promote it. And sure since this piece of *Mahumetan* Zeal has been transplanted into *Christendom*, it has been much more mischievous than in its native soil: Christianity having been infinitely more oppressed by those that thus fought *for* it, than those that were in arms *against* it. Whether upon this score the *Pope* have not done her more harm than the *Turk*, I leave to consideration.

yet Magistrates may use the sword to defend Religion, and punish the violation thereof when once legally established.

6. But what is here said of the *military* sword, I intend not should be applied to the *civil*; for I treat not here of those legal punishments, which *magistrates* inflict upon their disobedient subjects; who indeed may *justly*, nay indeed must *necessarily* require conformity to *ecclesiastical* laws, as well as the *civil*: The eruptions in the *one* commonly over-flowing the *other* also, and *schism* usually ending in *Rebellion*; so that 'tis apparently their interest to guard themselves from those riotous effects of pretended zeal; nor is it less their duty, they being, as the ancients express it, *Custodes utriusque tabulæ*; in St. *Paul*'s language, *the ministers of God*, *Rom.* 13. and in *Constantine*'s dialect Ἐπίσκοποι πρὸς τὰ ἔξω, *Bishops in the whole outward administration of the Church*; and if heresie or schism be a *sin*, are by their places obliged to approve themselves *avengers*, to execute wrath no less there, than in other circumstances: And that they are sins and of no small bulk, none can doubt that observes *heresie* ranked, *Gal.* 5. with *idolatry*, *witchcraft*, *hatred*, *murders*, and other sins of the flesh; or *schism* markt out by the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, as a kind of *petrefying crime*, which induces that induration, to which the fearful expectation of wrath is consequent, for so we find, *Heb.* 10. 26. that *forsaking the assemblies* is lookt on as previous to *apostasie* and final defection: And therefore sure the magistrate can do nothing kinder, even to the offenders, than by taking their sin early, prevent that fatal growth of it. But (that his just power thus rescued) I may assume my former assertion, and conclude, that all other violences are so far from *advancing* Christianity, that they extremely *weaken* and *disadvantage* it.

Popular heats and tumults are but an ill way of reforming Errors.

7. But of no sort is this more eminently true than of those *popular heats*, where the people undertake to chastise *error*: For besides that the outrages then committed are very apt to avert men even from truths which they see so barbarously defended, it often happens that the *multitude* take *causless alarms*, and think their faith is invaded, when it is not. A memorable instance of this kind *Euagrius* gives in his Eccl. History, where he tells us, that the emperor *Anastasius* having added to the *Trisagium* this clause, *Who was crucified for our salvation*, the whole city of *Constantinople* was in an uproar,

uproar, upon an ignorant jealousie that those words had some heretical meaning; in which fury they happening to light upon a poor silly *monk*, they immediately kill him as the *inventor* of that clause, and a *conspirer* against the Trinity: So unhappily absurd are the transports of *wild Zeal*, which where it rules, does besides the *direct mischiefs* of tumult and sedition, create *others* at the rebound, which are more permanent, and discompose and embitter mens spirits, and render them so ambitiously *greedy* of *quarrels* for their Religion, that they are not only prepar'd to *receive*, but to *seek encounters*: And 'tis too sure they can never be wanting to persons of such tempers, since the *adversaries* of truth cannot have more *advantage* or encouragement against it, than this *unpeaceable humour* of those that profess it.

A too eager and violent Zeal is injurious to Religion, and opposite to the Meekness of the Gospel.

8. By these several ways has it come to pass, that even that *zeal* which should be the *life* of Christianity, is become its disease; and *Religion* like a *hectick body* is consum'd by its own *heats*, if at least I may call those its own, which derive not from its proper and native constitution, but are the accidents of its declining state: For how confidently soever men pronounce of themselves, and believe that they are then most *pious*, when they are most *eager* and *unquiet*; yet 'tis sure this is far removed from the true *genius* and temper of *Religion*, which like the *God* it worships, makes its approaches, not in *winds* and *earth-quakes*, but in the *still small voice*, 1 *Kings* 19. 12. And when 'tis consider'd, that the greatest part of the evangelical law is made up of *precepts* of meekness, long-suffering, and condescension; we must conclude that *zeal* very *preposterous*, that pretends to obey by *violating* them, or to establish *Religion* by *undermining* the most essential parts of it; and to persons under that mistake, we may most properly apply the *reproof* given by Christ to his disciples upon the same occasion, *You know not what manner of spirit you are of.*

Our fierce and unnatural heats are oft mistaken for true Christian Zeal.

9. It will therefore become men to look with *jealousie* on themselves in this particular; not too confidently to *pursue* every incitation which carries a shew of piety, but soberly to *weigh* how it agrees with the rules and œconomy of that Gospel, for which it pretends so much concern; for though the *true Christian zeal* can never be too much cherished, yet alas! 'tis not *every warmth* we feel about *Religion* that can own *that title*; and sure we do not more often, or more fatally mistake any thing, than in applying that venerable *name* to things of a far *inferior*, nay, sometimes of a *contrary* nature. How often upon this error have men ascrib'd that to their *piety*, which they owed to their *complexions*, and thought 'twas their *Religion* made them earnest, when 'twas merely their *constitution*? Nay, how often has *Satan* taken this advantage of transforming himself into an *angel of light*, and insinuating his illusions under this disguise? And truly they must still be liable to both these deceits, so long as they place the *essence* of Christian zeal in *heat* and *eagerness*. 'Tis true indeed it has its heats, but actuated in a far different way; it has flames of *love*, not of *anger*; to melt, not consume our enemies; and makes us apter to pour out our *own blood* a sacrifice to truth, than *that of gain-sayers*. In short, if it be a fire, 'tis that *pure elemental* which the *Peripateticks* talk of, which is but of a moderate heat; apt to *cherish*, not *devour*.

We may exercise moderation without lukewarmness.

10. And would God men would so far believe this, as to think there may be *moderation*, without the danger of *Laodicean luke-warmness*, and upon that supposition suffer themselves to cool into a treatable temper, and then I should humbly offer to them these few considerations:

The fallibility of human nature ought to be an argument to charity and moderation towards those that differ from us.

11. First, the great and universal *fallibility* of humane nature, which renders it not only possible that we *may*, but certain that every one of us *shall* err in something or other; and this sure is very proper to persuade lenity to those whom we find actually erring. 'Tis the *Apostle*'s argument in the case of sin, *Gal.* 6. 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* Where the common peccability of mankind is urged to induce commiseration and gentleness towards the offenders; and if this be of force *in sin*, where the concurrence of the will renders the person more inexcusable, it will surely hold much more in *bare error*, which being purely involuntary, (for nothing is properly error farther than it is so) 'tis to be lookt on rather as the *disease* than *crime* of the person; and since we use not to exclaim against men for being *sick*, but compassionately to endeavour their *recovery*, why should we here use so much a *contrary method*? 'Tis true indeed, 'tis necessary sometimes in order to the *cure*, and sometimes for preventing the *infection* of others, to do some things *uneasie* to the patient; and what tends regularly to either of these ends, may in this case also be charitably done by those that have authority; but *that* differs as far from our usual *severities*, as the *lancings* of a physician do from the *wounds* of an adversary, or *publick* discipline from *private spleen*. So that notwithstanding this, we may resume our *con-*

clusion and infer from the *errableness* of our nature, the *reasonableness of compassion* to the seduced. And as it thus prompts us to look *gently* upon others, so also to reflect *impartially* upon our selves; and consider how possible it is, that even whilst we condemn others, we may indeed be in the wrong, and then all the invectives we make at their *supposed* errors, fall back with a rebounded force upon our own *real* ones. If this possibility were but adverted to, it would make us less positive and dogmatical in our opinions, and so consequently take away one main ground of contention; for though we often quarrel about *matters*, which are indeed but *conjectural*, yet not till we esteem them *otherwise*; and when we consider how many men have vehemently believed *apparent falshoods*, it may well allay our *confidences* in all those cases, where we have not some *firmer ground* than our *own* (or indeed any humane) *judgment* to build on it.

Prudence should direct us to the fittest means for the reducing those that be in an error.

12. As for those who have the *surest grounds* of persuasion, and by their security of being themselves in the truth, have the more *reason* to be earnest in propagating it to others: Let them in the second place consider, how necessary 'tis to chuse *appropriate means* to that good end, without which they do but undermine *themselves*, and defeat their own *aims*. Indeed Prudence is not only a *moral*, but *Christian* virtue; and such as is necessary to the constituting of all others; without it devotion degenerates into superstition, liberality into profuseness, and this of zeal becomes only a pious kind of phrensie. And of persons so possest, God may say as *Achish* did of *David*, 1 *Sam.* 21. 15. *have I need of mad-men?* No sure, the *defence of truth* is too *noble a cause* to be so managed; its *champions* are not like men in a fray, to make every thing a weapon that they can first snatch up, and lay on as chance or fury guides, but are deliberately to consult the properest expedients, use not only *force* but *stratagem* against the enemy, and yet withal to take care, that while they *oppose* one, another gain not *advantage*: For alas! 'tis indifferent to our grand *adversary*, by which of his temptations we fall, and if by subverting the *faith* of some, he shipwrack the *charity* of others, he has his *end*, and triumphs at once both over the *speculative* and *practick* part of our *Religion*.

Blind and rash zeal many times betrays us into great errors and miscarriages.

13. And this may induce a farther consideration, and prompt us to examine what degree of guilt lies on those, who either out of a blind or rash zeal, have given him this advantage. And here though I cannot doubt, but God makes *great allowances* to the miscarriages of *sincere intentions*, yet perhaps we have carv'd more liberally to our selves than he designs us, and presume our security greater than in truth it is. For how innocent soever a good purpose may make our *error*, yet 'tis a privilege beyond all possibility of grant, that our *sins* should be so also; therefore if our mispersuasions beget wicked practice, we may be accountable for the *one*, though not for the *other*. We find indeed St. *Paul* alledges his *ignorance* as the cause of his finding *mercy*, for his persecuting the Church, but we are to remember what that *mercy* he there refers to is; not that of *absolution*, but *conversion*; and had he resisted the *later*, though with never so full a persuasion of his doing well in it, I much doubt whether his good meaning would have secur'd him the *former*; so that all the *encouragement* that example can afford is, that God may probably do more for the reducing an *erring* than a *malicious* persecutor: And when 'tis considered that all the odds that Christ makes between him that does ill *knowingly* and *ignorantly*, is in the *number* of stripes; we must resolve our *mistakes* are no such *amulets* as totally to secure us. And then whether our *guilts* shall not swell in proportion to the *ills* we do, is a question that sure can never be resolved in the negative: For if a *good intention* cannot alter the *nature* of sin, sure it can as little change their *degree*, or make that of two persons equally mistaken, the *murder* of the one shall not be a greater crime, than an *intemperate speech* of the other. And upon this measure the accounts of erring zeal are like to rise very high with many; unless we can think rebellion and bloodshed, sacrilege and schism, with all that train of zealous enormities to be light and trivial.

Our zeal for Religion will never excuse the evil we commit in defence thereof.

14. Nor will it at all legitimate *these*, or any *other* crimes, though they should happen to be committed in the *defence of truth*: Of this St. *Peter* is a ready instance, who when to *guard* him, who was truth it self, he had *violated* the authority of the magistrate in *wounding* an officer; Christ reprehends his rashness, and instead of applauding his *zeal*, upbraids his *absurdity*, that could think his *mean aids* considerable to him, who could command *legions of Angels* to his rescue. And sure he is not so much more impotent in his *glory*, than he was in his *exinanition*, as now to need our *sin* to secure any of his concerns; and if St. *Peter* were thus check'd for *using* that sword which he was a little before warn'd to *buy*, it must sure set an ill character upon those *tumultuous reformations*, which have so much employed the

the *zeal* of later ages, to which there can never want a concurrence of several great *sins*, the *guilt* whereof will scarce be wiped off by their design'd *subserviency* to truth; what degree of *extenuation* it may afford, is hard to pronounce, since we have no *rule* to measure it by. But whatsoever it is, we are to remember, that it can belong only to such a zeal as is *purely religious*, that mixes not with our *passions* or *interests*; and therefore before men be too forward to *appropriate* any indulgence of that kind, 'twill be necessary to *examine*, whether no sinister adherent have vitiated that *integrity* of their purpose, to which alone it can (even by their own award and sentence) appertain.

A good meaning will never justifie a bad action.

15. I have insisted the more on *this*, because many are apt to ascribe too unlimitedly to the force of a *good meaning*, to think that is able to bear the stress of whatsoever commissions they shall lay on it; and by thus presuming on their *antidote*, venture boldly on the *deadliest poisons*. To such the foregoing considerations may be useful; and by robbing them of that *imaginary* security, help them to a *real* one, by making their good *purposes* the director of good *actions*, not the apology for bad. This would make religion look consonant to it self, which now groans under the reproach of all those ills that are acted under its patronage; and sure to rescue her from such a *scandal*, is but a very moderate piece of *compassion*: Yet would God she might obtain it even from *those* who profess themselves her greatest *votaries*: But alas! 'tis one sad circumstance of her ruin, that she owes it to such; that those weapons which should *defend* her, thus *recoil* into her bowels, and *zeal* should do her more mischief than *profaneness*; for while she is but scoffed at by *that*, she is wounded by *this*: Nor are those *wounds* ever like to close, till our Zeal grow more *balsamick*, partake of those *healing qualities* of love and meekness, the want whereof has rendred it so unhappily instrumental to our distractions.

CHAP. XVIII.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Sixthly, Idleness.

Idleness a cause of our Disputes.

1. BUT as *this over active* humour has done abundant mischief to the Church, so it is observable, that the *direct contrary* has done as much; nay, which is yet stranger, the one is frequently the product of the other, and our too *busie zeal* springs from our too *great Idleness*. How much soever this may sound like *paradox*, yet both *reason* and *experience* attest the truth of it; for we are to consider that God has put an *active principle* into man, which 'tis impossible so to suppress, as that there shall be a total cessation from *motion*: And therefore every intermitting of sober, regular actings, makes way for wild extravagant ones; for as nature is said so vehemently to abhor vacuity, that the very inanimate bodies would forsake their specifick motions to prevent it; so when the *mind* is empty, when it has no worthy and profitable *speculation* to entertain it, every the most improper and preternatural *object* offers it self, and importunately crouds in to fill the *vacuum*. This seems to have been well understood, though ill applied by *Pharaoh*, when he thought the *Israelites* proposal of travelling into the wilderness to their devotions, was the effect of their too great leisure at home; and therefore encreases their *tasks* as the properest way of diverting their *design*: And in like manner we find those that treat of *politicks*, insist upon the necessity of keeping the *people busie*, in order to which it is, that they mention the use of *mathematicks* and other contemplative sciences, to entertain the *active spirits* of a nation, in demonstrating of *problems*, solving *Phænomena's*, and drawing *schemes* and *diagrams*, who else would be practising upon the *government*, making new *idea's* and platforms for the *commonwealth*; and doubtless there is parity of reason in the ecclesiastick state, which would have been at *more peace*, had some men found themselves *other diversions*.

The Church was at greatest peace and union within her self, when under trouble and persecution from abroad.

2. And this is confirm'd to us by experiment and observation of event; for if we look into the primitive times, we shall find that when there was a necessity of defending the *common faith* against *heathenism*, when Christians were employed in writing *apologies* and *vindications*, there were much fewer of these *intestine debates* (at least such as were *metaphysical* and purely notional) they had their hands full of the *foreign enemy*, and had the less temptation to jangle among *themselves*. So also when they were under the greatest storms of persecution, when the Church

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was most violently assaulted from *without*, it had the greatest calm *within*. They were then incessantly employed, and busied their thoughts in preparing for the fiery trial. Those cloudy days made them keep close at home, waiting for the Bridegroom's coming, and suffer'd them not to wander abroad for those unprofitable curiosities, which though like *oil* they might nourish *flame*, yet would never furnish their *lamps*, or gain them admission to the wedding; but in the intervals, and especially after the total cessation of their calamity, when their peace had taken them off their *vigilance*, then while they slept, the envious man had advantage to sow his *tares*. Rest made them *idle*, idleness made them *curious*, and curiosity *contentious*; and those who under the tyranny of a *Nero* or *Domitian* were in perfect harmony, under the gentle pious regimen of a *Constantine*, grew to the greatest discord; and perhaps (besides the divine and extraordinary supports the Church had in her greatest *conflicts*) this may be one of the best natural *accounts*, how she came to flourish most under her heaviest *pressures*.

Our divisions arise chiefly from the neglect of moral and practical duties.

3. But our observation ends not here, for besides this extraordinary importunity of thoughts, which persecuting times occasion'd, Christianity is in its frame and constitution an *active state*, has its standing business, and besides all *accidental*, a series of *determinate, constant employments*, sufficient to entertain mens minds; from which we may infer, that when this is throughly adverted to, there will be few *chasms* of time to be filled with *foreign impertinencies*. And this gives a clear account how our *divisions* have come to grow upon us, namely, by the neglect of *practick duties*, for as every age degenerated more from *primitive piety*, so they advanced farther in *nice enquiries* and *new opinions*; and as the zeal of *practice* grew cool, so that of *dispute* gathered heat and vigour. So that if we consider how far our *good works* fall short of the first Christians, we need not wonder to see our *controversies* so far exceed them; that time which was gain'd from the *one*, being employed in hammering and forging the *other*. I do not forget that I have before ranked this *diversion* of Christian practice among the *effects* of our contentions, and foresee it may be thought very inartificial here, to make it the *cause* also: But alas! its concern in them is so extravagantly great, as to have at once the relation of child and parent, to be both root and branch, fountain and stream, and like a *circle* unites in *it self* beginning and end: For as it first gave *birth* to our quarrels, so it finally receives *increase* from them. In short, our oscitant *lazy piety* gave vacancy for them, and they will now lend none back again for more *active duty*. And as this *neglect* of our general calling of Christianity has been thus pernicious, so have the *ill effects* thereof been improved by the like ill attendance on our particular ones. We find St. *Paul* takes notice, that the *younger widows*, who deserted their own *ecclesiastical* office, grew *busie bodies* in the secular affairs of others; and sure we may with truth invert the note, and observe that *those*, who either desert or neglect their *secular* callings, are the most perniciously *medling* in ecclesiastick matters. Did men conscientiously employ themselves in their *honest occupations*, their minds would be sufficiently *diverted*, and it would not become the work of artificers to make new schemes of doctrines or discipline; divinity would not then pass the *yard* and *loom*, the *forge* and *anvil*, nor preaching be taken in as an easier supplementary *trade*, by those that disliked the *pains* of their own. But all this, alas! we have seen to the equal shame and detriment of piety. *Mechanicks* of all sorts have presum'd to *teach* what themselves never *learnt*; and those that serv'd long *apprenticeships* to other crafts, have become *divines* in a moment, and with the same emulous industry wherewith they us'd to invent new *fashions*, have made new *Religions*. And as idleness has thus made some *preachers*, so it has made more *hearers*, those, who either by the *easiness* of their Callings, or their slight managery of them, have had the most *vacant time*, have been the aptest to run after *new teachers*. Hence it is that towns and cities have been the great *nurseries of faction*, the *leisure* of shop-men making them more *inquisitive* after, and *receptive* of novelties. And were that *over grown zeal* of sermons, which has now devour'd all other parts of Religion among that sort of men, throughly scanned, we should find idleness goes very far in its *composition*; for besides that hearing is the most *lazy* of all religious offices, as appears by the *undisturb'd sleeps* men can take at sermons; it is manifest this insatiate appetite of it, is originally founded either in the not *having* business, or not *attending* to it. For should I ask such men, whether if necessity had enforc'd St. *Paul's* rule upon them, that without their *labour* they should not *eat*, they would have spent their whole week at *lectures*, and trusted to be fed by the *ear*. I believe few could pretend to have begun with so exorbitant a zeal, though the truth is in the issue, it sometimes arrives to it; and men that have *itching ears* forget the rest of the

Tradesmen by the easiness of their Callings, or their slight managery of them, have been the aptest to run after New Teachers.

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body, whilſt to gratifie them, they totally neglect all care of their *ſecular concerns*, and bring themſelves and families to want and beggary.

Servants have neglected their duty to their Maſters, by running after factious Teachers.

4. Nor is it only this *one rank* of perſons whom idleneſs has betrayed to faction, *ſervants* we have frequently ſeen under the ſame ſeducement, while either having but *little work*, or but *little diligence* in it, they have found time to liſten after *novel doctrines*, with which being once tainted, they impatiently thirſt after more, and neglecting the *duties* of their place, ſpend their *time*, which by compact is their maſter's (and can with no more juſtice be purloin'd from him than his goods) in following *factious Teachers*, who inſtruct them ſo in their Chriſtian *liberty*, that they bring them to defie all *ſubjection*: And by telling them they are to call no man maſter upon *earth*, that they are to own no king nor prieſt but *Chriſt*; teach them to contemn all authority, *domeſtick*, *civil*, or *eccleſiaſtick*.

Women for this cauſe have neglected their Family and Houſhold affairs.

5. If we look farther into *families*, we ſhall find alſo that many of our ſhe zealots become ſo upon the very ſame ground, when *women* neglect that which St. *Paul* aſſigns them as their proper buſineſs, *the guiding of the houſe*, their zeal is at once the *product* and *excuſe* of their Idleneſs; and in ſpight of the *ill character* the Wiſe man has ſet on her, *whoſe feet abide not in her houſe*, *Prov.* 7. 11. it becomes the *mark* of a ſaint, when a lecture or conventicle is taken in the way: And though theſe feminine irregularities may ſeem to be of no great concern to the publick, yet experience convinces the contrary; it having been the *unhappy privilege* of that ſex (as ancient as their mother *Eve*) to be able to do great and important *miſchiefs*; and doubtleſs many *men* may give the ſame account of their ſchiſm and ſedition, that *Adam* did of his firſt ſin, *The woman that thou gaveſt me*, &c. This has always been well underſtood by *ſeducers*, who have found it the moſt compendious way to their deſigns, *to lead captive ſilly women*, and make them the *duck-coys* to their whole family: But even thoſe who have miſt of this influence over the *minds* of their husbands, have yet had it over their *purſes*, and out of them ſupported the *rabbies* of the faction; who in gratitude to thoſe wiſe *Abigails* give their husbands the *title*, and perhaps wiſh them the fate of *Nabal*. And God knows, how many men have thus been made contributers to the *cauſe* they have moſt deteſted, maintain'd that *fire* which thoſe *incendiaries* have kindled in the holy place; *money* being no leſs the *ſinews* of eccleſiaſtical than ſecular *war*.

The great neglect of Catechizing hath eminently contributed to our Diviſions.

6. Thus we ſee how the *Idleneſs*, even of the moſt inconſiderable perſons has at the rebound been extremely *pernicious* to the Church, which like a *clock* or *watch* may be diſorder'd by the *ruſt* of the leaſt *pin*; how much more then by that of the *main wheels* and *ſprings*? If negligence in *lay callings* have though but an oblique, yet ſo inauſpicious an influence, the like neglect in *eccleſiaſtick* muſt needs have a worſe, becauſe more immediate and direct. And would to God we could ſay this had been wanting to the completing the miſchief: But alas! many of thoſe who are called to labour in the *Lord's vineyard*, ſeem to have forgot their errand, and ſtand there all the day *idle* (a much worſe ſight than to have ſeen them ſo only in the *market-place*;) ſo that I fear there is too evident ground of ſaying, that the *ſlight execution* of the paſtoral office has been *one* of the moſt eminent contributers to our diſtractions. And among *all the parts* of that charge, none has been more generally, or more pernicioully neglected than that of *catechizing*; the want whereof has left people ſo unbottom'd, that like a *houſe* built on the *ſand*, every wind of doctrine blows down that faith which they only profeſt, but underſtood not. This is that which has made ſo many *unſtable ſouls*, as St. *Peter* obſerves, 2 *Pet.* 2. 14. to be the proper prey of deceivers. And God knows, we may from ſad experiment confirm the note. I wiſh the ſame *negligence* do not again evidence it ſelf by the ſame *effects*: But beſides this, which is part of the *publick* miniſtry (and deſervedly is ſo, being uſeful to the whole Church, the aged as well as children) there are *private* intercourſes between paſtor and people, which are of *great uſe*, would God they were of *equal practice*: We know a *careful* ſhepherd does not only turn his *flock* into a *common paſture*, and then think he has done his work, but does with a particular advertence obſerve the *thriving* of every one of them, takes notice of their ſingle *ſtrayings* and *diſeaſes*, and accordingly applies himſelf to reduce or cure them, and ſurely the like care is full as neceſſary in the *ſpiritual* ſhepherd; 'tis not the *counſel* which is promiſcuouſly diſpenſed in a ſermon (and whereof 'tis odds every man takes that which is leaſt proper for him) that will do the *buſineſs*: Converts come not in now as in St. *Peter's* days, in throngs and ſhoals, a more diſtinct and particular application is now neceſſary; men muſt be treated with apart, their particular *wants* diſcern'd, and *applications* accordingly made of *inſtructions*, *reproof* or *comfort*, and 'tis theſe appropriate *medicines*, that are like to make *ſound*

flocks. Had ministers generally bestowed more *pains* this way, they might probably have frustrated the *attempts* of seducers, who could not so easily have insinuated themselves into the people, had they found them thus prepossest: But while these with all the arts of a subtle *industry* infuse their *poisons* into every one they meet, nothing but the like *diligence* in administring *antidotes*, is like to countermine them. How much of that has been us'd, I shall leave to the consciences of concern'd persons to determine. But besides the *ill influence* the pastor's negligence has on the *people*, it has in respect of themselves an immediate propriety to the advancing our debates, the *leisure* which is thus acquir'd, being apt to betray *speculative persons* to the study of those *curious questions*, which are the great *disturbers* of our peace; and of those that study them, so few keep themselves in neutrality, that parties are still fomented by it; Whereas, were the *practical business* of their charge throughly attended, the *remainder of time* would not be more than the *study* of the more solid, useful parts of divinity would exact, and consequently there would no *surplus* be left for those *dangerous impertinencies, which*, as the Apostle says, *serve to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers*, 2 Tim. 2. 14. But when our watchmen *sleep*, 'tis no marvel if they *dream* too, and entertain themselves and others with those *fantastick notions*, which the great day will manifest to have had nothing of *weight* and *reality*, besides the mischiefs they wrought.

The leisure hours of our Church-men ill imploy'd in the study and writing of Controversies.

7. And indeed if we scan the *volumes* of those vain speculations, we shall have cause to conclude, that Idleness has *created*, as well as *fomented* them; and they had as well wanted authors, as abettors, had men found themselves more useful business: And that not only the extemporary *Chimæra's of fanaticks*, but the more elaborate *niceties of the schools* have been thus derived: We know *air* possesses no *place*, where it first finds not a *vacuity*, nor could those lighter *notions* have filled mens *brains*, had they found them prepossest with what was more *solid*: But when men wanted more *substantial work* for their understandings, they were fain to employ them thus in making *cob-webs*, of which they have made a worse sort of *Jewish* veil in the Sanctuary, and have now involved the *Gospel* in greater obscurities, than the *Law* was before: Whence our *Bezaleels* and *Aholiabs* have been inspir'd for this work, I shall not determine; but sure not from him whose character St. *John* gives us (in peculiar reference to Gospel revelation) that *he is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, 1 John 1. 5.

Idleness is oft a temptation to spend our time ill,

8. Thus we see even *Idleness* wants not its *operation*, but is productive of great and mischievous *effects*; it being the unhappy *property* of that vice, that it *supplants* it self, and by a fatal *antiperistasis* makes men perniciously *active*; so that we may truly say, *sloth* has made more business than *industry*. I am sure in this instance it has cut out work for many ages, though of such a kind, that we have little reason to wish that our *Lord* at his coming should find us *so doing*: Yet for ought now appears, our *activity* is so wholly bent that way, that 'tis like to be the *only*, at least the most *intense business* we shall be found at.

and hath been the original of faction, and occasion of much mischief to the Church.

9. I might here take a very apt occasion to declaim against Idleness, as the unhappy fountain of so great mischiefs, but that is a *vice* that has been so often *arraign'd*, that I need not repeat those *charges* which all authors, natural, moral, and divine have laid against it. Let but this of its being the *original* of *faction* be added, and there can be nothing wanting to render it a most *dangerous crime*; yea, and a most *monstrous* one too, that operates thus preternaturally, that *freezes* and yet *inflames* men at once, *stupifies* and *enrages*: And yet, alas! there is as much riddle in its *fate* as its *nature*, 'tis *hated*, and yet *embraced*, generally *decried*, and yet as generally *cherished*: And though it have no *advocates*, has many *friends*. Would God men would at last be ashamed to *be* what they are ashamed to *own*, and by a diligent attendance on their proper business secure themselves first from doing *nothing*, and then from doing *ill*; the one being so close an attendant on the other, that 'tis scarce possible to sever them. And God knows, the Church finds too sad proof of their connexion: *Idleness* having serv'd as *ashes*, to keep alive that *fire* which has set her in *combustion*. Thus unhappily *passive* is she in our disorders, and *accessary* to all our guilts and punishments: All our peccant *humours* concur to her *disease*, and like a common *mark*, she receives *arrows* from all quarters. We have seen how many *contributers* there are to her *ruin*, every one whereof with a wanton cruelty (like *Cesar's* murderers) are ambitious to inflict *new wounds*, and to give her *supernumerary deaths*; and whilst she is thus surrounded with *assassines*, what can we expect, but that her present *languishings* should end in *death?* that Christian Religion now crumbled into so many *minute fractions*, should like *dust* be scatter'd, and irrecoverably dissipated? And thus infallibly it must be, if either God do not miraculously countermine us, and

do more for us, than we can do against our selves, or we recover so much sobriety, as to forbear to *massacre* what we pretend to *love*, and endeavour to bind up those *wounds*, at which our own souls are like to *expire*.

CHAP. XIX.

The Conclusion drawn from all the Premisses.

The best and speediest way for the healing our distractions, is to remove the occasions thereof.

1. WE have hitherto examin'd the *effects* and *originals* of our contentions, and now the only remaining enquiry is concerning the *ways* of redress. And that will exact no long disquisition: For as in *diseases*, 'tis said, the knowing the *cause* is one half of the *cure*; so more especially is it here, where the *remedies* are merely *privative*, and we are not to be healed by *external applications*, but only by *substracting* those humours which feed the malady. There will therefore need no other *prescription*, than to advise the *exterminating* of all those passions and interests which have appear'd accessary to our quarrels, which though they are become the publick *epidemick disease*, yet as the *infection* did, so must the *cure* arise from single persons: For as we look not a *common pestilence* should cease without due care and manage both of the *sick* and *sound*; so neither can this *Church plague* ever abate, but by the cure, or fortifying its *individual members*.

Every man ought in this case to examine and suspect himself guilty rather than another.

2. Let every man therefore, who has any way made himself a party to these contests, seriously interrogate his own heart, what it is that has engag'd him in them; if any of the *sinister motives* before rehearst, let him for a while shift the *scene*, and instead of *accusing others* as opposites to truth, *condemn himself* as an enemy to peace; remembring that how just or important soever the *cause* be, it is not so to him, whilst he serves his humours and designs under its covert. The *Philosophers* in their darker notions of *truth* could yet discern, that she was not accessible to *any* who sought her not purely for *her self*, with sincere and single intentions, and if she entertain no *pupils* that are not so qualified, is it fit she should have *guardians* and *champions* of a quite distant temper? No, he that undertakes the defence of *speculative* verity, must first possess himself of that *practick* truth the *Psalmist* speaks of, *Psal.* 51. that *in the inward parts*, such a simplicity and integrity of purpose, as may supplant all those indirect aims, purge out every prejudice and passion which may byass and pervert him; and by that time he has done *this*, 'tis odds but he will find a *new face of affairs*, and discern that many of those things he so fiercely contended about, were either false or trivial; acquir'd their *considerableness* only from those *magnifying perspectives* of his own lusts, through which he viewed them. However till he have thus denudated himself of all these *encumbrances*, he is utterly unqualified for these *agones*; and how lawfully soever others may strive, 'tis sure he cannot, that does it upon so unlawful grounds, and therefore upon *pain* of losing much more than a *corruptible crown*, must *withdraw himself*. As for those who can yet *acquit* themselves from having fomented our distractions, I shall not forbid them to look with great complacency upon it, but rather by considering how valuable a *piece of innocency* it is, engage and encourage themselves to *preserve* it; and to that purpose, jealously to examine the *first overtures* of a temptation. When they find any *proneness* to immerse in faction, any unwonted *heat* towards a dissenter, to trace it to its *fountain* and *original*; nicely to observe whether it issue not from some of those *envenom'd springs* forementioned, and make as much haste to stop its *current*, as they would to impede the most *overwhelming inundation*; for such 'twill infallibly prove to those who indulge to its course. But as a *turf* will at first close the *breach*, which neglected becomes the *inlet* of a mighty *torrent*; so had this *early vigilance* been us'd, it might with ease have prevented those distempers in *private* breasts, from whence the *general* confusion has sprung. As it is, might but these two things be obtain'd, would but the guilty *purge*, and the innocent *guard* themselves, we might yet hope to see an *end* of our discords: Not that I suppose it possible to extinguish *all diversity* of opinions among men, who, from their *differing faculties*, and other *guiltless occurrents*, may and will have their *judgments* severally dispos'd. But first, were *all*, who have upon the former culpable motives enter'd the lists, *excluded*, we should find they would amount to such a number, that there would be *few left* to maintain the combat. Nay, secondly, were it not for those *conceal'd inducements*, there would scarce be any *combat* to maintain, those are the things that convey the

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sting and *malignity* into our differences, without those we might dissent, but not fall out; and should no more be angry to see another *opine contrary to us*, than we are to see him of a *different stature*, or *complexion*. In fine, let us pretend what we will, 'tis the carnality *within*, that raises all the combustions *without*: This is the great *wheel* to which the clock owes its *motion*, while the *pretext* of truth and piety is but like the *hand*, set indeed more conspicuously, but directed wholly by the *secret movings* of the other. This, *this* alone is it which creates and continues our broils, and by a monstrous conjunction of *properties*, is it self both *flame* and *fuel*: Nor can we doubt, that from hence spring those railing accusations we bring one against another, if we remember what St. *Jude* tells us, that the *Angel* brought them not even against the *Devil* himself, he could calmly manage a *dispute* with the most execrable and provoking *adversary*, because his *angelick nature* had none of that *carnal leaven* which ferments to the *souring* of ours; an evident indication what it is that has rendred our arguings so invective, that *divinity* seems now an artifice to elude *law*, by daily patronizing those *libels*, which would else be obnoxious *to civil justice*.

3. But I presume there need no more be said to evince this, which has, I fear, the attestation of too many consciences, to be generally doubted; the *greater difficulty* will be, to persuade the depositing of those *lusts*, which, though they are confessedly the *boutefeaus* among us, have yet by I know not what fascination so *endear'd* themselves, that we tenaciously *retain* them in spight of all their appendent mischiefs; nay, we *cherish* and *foster* them, and for that very purpose bring them under the *covert* of religion. He that has but a *puny vice*, if he get it like *Joash* conceal'd and shelter'd in the *Sanctuary*, 'twill not only *live*, but *reign* too; put on a port and majesty, and appear venerable upon the pretence of that piety, whose essense and being it evacuates and undermines.

Men generally cherish their vices under the covert of Religion.

4. Indeed sin never arrives at so luxuriant a *growth*, as when it roots in *hallowed ground*, which *Satan* so well knows, that he has ever been industrious to *plant* it in that *soil*. Thus we find he had introduced the most *brutish crimes* into the religion of the *Gentiles*, interwoven them into their sacred *rites* and *mysteries*, till virtue and vice had changed names, and it became *piety* to be wicked, and *profaneness* to be innocent. And when that gross deceit became detected by *Gospel light*, when he could not in the same manner obtrude upon *Christians*, he yet found the way to do it more obliquely, and by starting these religious *quarrels*, gave it once employment and reputation to the most irreligious *vices*. For alas! what part of wild *fury* was there in the Heathen *Bacchanals*, which we have not seen equall'd, if not exceeded by some *intoxicated zealots*? or what *cruelty* in their most barbarous *rites*, which has not been matcht by the *inhumanity* of dissenting Christians? So that upon a just scanning all our splendid *pretence* of sanctity is but an *emulation* of Gentile impurity under a better name; and while we damn Heathens for their *moral virtues*, we are yet so stupid as to hope our selves to be saved by their *worst vices*.

Religion is sometimes made to countenance the foulest crimes.

5. And now who that does enough *consider*, can think he can enough bewail this sad state of affairs? that Christianity should thus out-run it self, and bring us round to *Gentilism* again, whilst her professors ridiculously contend for the *title* of the best Christians, by *such acts* as denominate them none at all. Thus have we inverted the *significancy* of that *sacred name*, and made it serve only to upbraid the *contrariety* of our *practice*; so that *that* which was once the *index* to point out all *moral* and *divine virtues*, does now on the contrary mark out *that part* of the world where *least of them* reside. This, this alone is the *prize* we have acquir'd with so much *sweat* and *blood*, this the *triumph* we have brought to our religion, which indeed could never have sunk to such a *despicableness* by any endeavours but our *own*; for so long as Christianity waged *war* only with *foreign* enemies, she never mist to be *victorious*, but since that these *intestine discords* have turn'd her force against *her self*, *Bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos*, there is no possibility of success, the mere *fight* implies a *defeat*, and the *swords* of all parties meet in her *bowels*. 'Twas a passionate *expostulation* that *Julia* is said to have us'd with her two sons, *Antonine* and *Geta*, whose animosities having prompted them to *divide* the empire, which they were joyntly to have *enjoyed*, she askt them, whether they would divide their mother also? implying how much their *discords* had rackt and torn her. And sure our *common mother* may make a yet sadder *complaint* of her sons, by whose *unkind dissentions* she is so miserably *mangled*, that she may cry out with the *Psalmist*, *My soul is among lions, and I lye among the children of men that are set on fire.*

The great end of Christianity perverted by those that contend about the purest profession of it.

6. And now, if amidst all our *importunate pretences* to piety, there be indeed any such thing among us, methinks it should give us some *relentings*, make us sadly consider

We ought to bewail the multitude of our distractions, and the hand we have had therein.

sider to what a *deplorable condition* we have brought that very *religion*, on which we profess to hang all our hopes; and would God these who are the most nearly concerned in this contemplation would pursue it to the utmost: Let them on the one hand set the most *glittering temptations* to discord, and on the other let them view the *dismal effects* of it, and then consider at how *dear a rate* they gratifie a few *impotent passions*. Can any man without horror think, that his *thirst* of glory has brought *dishonour* to his religion, and consequently to his God? that his *curious enquiries* into things secret, has helpt to evacuate the more *useful things* revealed? or in short, that his *pursuit* of his various *interests* and *appetites* has destroyed what was so incomparably more valuable, the *honour* of the Gospel, the *unity* of the Church, and as many *souls* as have perisht by that scandal? 'Twas as infamous a character of *inhumanity* as the very *poets* could feign of *Diomedes*, that *he fed his horses with man's flesh*; but alas! that barbarity is here infinitely out-done, when men nourish far *worse brutes*, their own unreasonable *lusts*, with those things that are most *sacred*. Certainly were the vastness of this *guilt* throughly weighed, 'twould make men sick of those petty wretched *acquists* they have thus purchased, make them fling back this *price of blood*, I say not, with the same *despair* but with as great *remorse* and *detestation* as *Judas* did the *silver pieces* for which he sold his Master. 'Tis sure the crimes have too great an affinity, as in all other circumstances, so especially in this, that as the one *was*, so the other *is* most frequently the guilt of an *Apostle*, I mean of those to whom Christ has committed the dispensing of that Gospel which they thus evacuate; and doubtless this is a consideration of great enhansement, as that which superadds *treachery* to all the other pestilent *ingredients* of the crime; 'tis the *falsifying* the most important *trust*: For under words of that signification we find the *office* of the ministry every where represented in Scripture, as *stewards*, *ambassadors*, *shepherds*, and consequently the accounts of the sin must swell so much the higher. For a steward to *embezle* those goods he undertakes to *manage*, an ambassador to *betray* his prince for whom he should *negotiate*, a shepherd to *worry* that flock which he is set to *guard*, these are crimes that double their malignity from the quality of the actors; and yet this is undeniably the guilt of all those, whose *profession* having devoted them to the *Church*, have impiously chang'd the *scene*, and devoted the Church to *them*, serv'd all their mean degenerous ends upon her; and as *chirurgions* are said sometimes to deal with profitable patients, kept open, nay, widened her *wounds* for their own *advantages*.

and not prostitute the peace and happiness of the Church to our passions and interests.

7. It has been the *priests Litany* as ancient as *Joel's* time, *Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach*; but now, alas! who shall prevail with them to do that themselves which they beg of God, to spare his people and his heritage? to prostitute them no more to their own sinister designs, nor by their vain and endless *contentions*, expose them as well to *ruin*, as *contempt*? He were indeed a happy orator, that could in this effectually intercede with them, though one would think the *wonder* should lie on the other side, and the only strange thing be, that they should either *need* or *resist* such a solicitation, it being so much the concern of all that ought, as well upon the score of *advantage*, as *duty*, to be dear to them; so that the *Church* may most aptly address to these her *sons*, in the same form St. *Paul* does to the *Philippians*, when he conjures them to unity, *Phil.* 2. 1. *If therefore there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil you my joy, that ye be like minded.* And can it be possible for any who have tasted all, or any of these, to think fit to wrangle them away? to exchange these divine *irradiations*, the antepast and emblem of Heaven, for those bitter *dissentions*; whose *alpha* and *omega*, their *original* and *end* are *Hell*, and do as lively represent, as they certainly lead to the horror and confusion of that land of darkness?

To study the peace of the Church is highly commendable and praiseworthy.

8. But if some mens appetites be so depraved, that they find more melody in *discord*, than in the *harmony* of the angelick quires, yet even these can discern *musick* in a consort of *plaudite's*, and seldom miss to be affected with those *eulogies* which are given themselves; and therefore though they disjoyn the Apostle's motives, *Phil.* 4. 8. and will do nothing for virtue, yet they may be presum'd more considerate of praise: And God knows, in a wrong sense they are too much so; and sure, as we have already observed by it, have made no small *contributions* to our *discords*: Yet did they measure *glory* by its right and proper *standard*, they would find they have all this while courted a *shadow*, and that the *substance* will never be acquir'd by being *fomenters* of publick mischief; but the unhappiness of it is, that our *ecclesiastick*, as our *secular* duellists abuse themselves with false notions of honour, novel opinions and subtle questions they think attest the *pregnancy* and *acuteness* of their understandings, and give them *reputation*; but alas! how vain an imagination is this? Who admires the *sagacity*

city

city of the viper, that eats her way through her *mother's bowels?* Or who reverences a man for the *sharpness* of that sword wherewith he commits his *parricide?* Nay, what more infamous brands have records of all ages stuck upon any, than those who were *ingeniosissime nequam, & facundi malo publico*, who us'd the best parts to the worst ends, and with the greatest *cunning* and *artifice* have contrived their *mischiefs?*

Small credit for any man to employ his wit or parts to the prejudice of the Church.

9. But could we abstract from these *pernicious effects*, and suppose that this *exercise* of their faculties were *innocent*, yet sure it would be too *light* and *impertinent* to become *matter of praise*. He that should spend all his time in *tying* inextricable knots, only to baffle the industry of those that should attempt to *unloose* them, would sure be thought not much to have serv'd his generation. 'Tis one of the certainest *estimates* we can make of a man, to measure him by the *employments* he chooses, if those be *slight* and *trifling*, they suggest the person to have *low thoughts*; what an abasement of maesty was it thought in *Nero* to become a *fidler* and *stage-player?* and *Herodian* tells u, That men hoped no longer for any thing princely from *Commodus* the emperor, when he had once listed himself among the *fencers*, and instead of the magnificent *stles* of his predecessors, derived from the *conquests* of great and populous nations, assumd this, *The vanquisher of a thousand gladiators:* And certainly 'tis no less a descent ad diminution for those who were design'd by God for the *highest atchievements*, the subuing the kingdom of Satan, and pulling down his strong holds, to devote themselves › these so much *ignobler contests*, and account their *conquests*, not from the numbeof *souls* won to God, but of *opposers* worsted in argument. Indeed, as we beforebserv'd, they have now rendred the *Church* a kind of *theatre*, disputes are manag with such sleight, and sophistry, that at the best the *litigants* do but set forth a shewof *fencers*; 'twere well if they did not sometimes play the *gladiators*, by that woundg deadly sharpness they use, and 'twould be consider'd what a change is now made: i the primitive times, none that own'd any relation to the Church were allowed tbe *spectators* of those games; now that is made the *stage*, and her ablest persons th*actors*. But certainly 'tis very little to the reputation of those who have so unwortly debaucht both it and themselves; and therefore to all other *dissuasives* we may adthis of the *uncreditableness:* For let men fancy what they please of the *glory* acquir'n these opportunities of shewing their parts, the best that can be said of them is, *thahey use wit foolishly.* A character whereof the one part devours the other, and leas not so much as a mouthful of that *popular air* which these *chamalions* gasp after. i a word, though *vain glory* be a principle I shall commend to no man, yet in thisse 'twere more tolerable if it would work the right way, put them upon what we really *praise-worthy*, and then sure 'twould incline them rather to *close*, than *widen* breaches of *Sion.* To inflict *wounds* on an unresisting patient, is a thing that reres neither *courage* nor *skill;* every man can do that who has but ill nature enouglbut to *cure* them is an act at once of *art* and *mercy*, and entitles to the praise of botlAnd therefore if any man's *eagerness* of glory have made him over-see the *way* tc let him now at last recover his *wandrings*, and seek it in this one only proper *med.*

We ought rather to repair those breaches which we have helpt to make.

10. t this is, I confess, a *topick* of persuasion fitter for *philosophers* than *divines*, and I v. I may have urg'd it impertinently; it being much less shame for *me* to have done scan for *them* to need such an argument. There is another more genuine and propcrrived from the nature of *distributive justice*, which requires a man to do his *utm*o repair the *injuries* he has done to any; this is so stated a *rule*, that all our *casuists*ly press it in all cases of damage: But are there not many of them, who while tso eagerly assert that *obligation* in other mens cases, do, as *David* did in the maof the poor man's lamb, severely sentence that *injustice*, whereof *themselves* are moighly guilty? To every such I would speak in the words of *Nathan*, and say, *T art the man.* Alas! shall every little *trifle* I purloin from my neighbour have *ht* enough to sink me to the *abyss?* and shall *thefts* of the greatest magnitude, tobbing God of his *honour*, the Church not only of her *patrimony*, but her *peace*, the world of those inestimable *benefits*, which from an uniform, consonant Christiawere to have been transmitted to it; shall these, I say, be so slight and inconsiole, as not to hinder his ascent to the hill of the Lord? Shall the least *violence* I cto the person of an enemy oblige me to *satisfaction*, and shall he rend and tear *body* of his Saviour (who willingly exposed his *natural* body only in tenderness at*mystical* one, which is thus violated) and shall this criminous *barbarity* exact nor towards amends? Certainly no man can have *partiality* enough to think it, and ido not; he is to remember himself indispensibly engag'd to take the same *course* hecribes to *others*, and with his utmost *industry* endeavour to repair the *injury* he has d

11. And

and all of us to concur and joyn therein as one man.

11. And O that we might see this so essential a piece of *justice* assum'd among us, that our impertinent *strifes* might be superseded, and all moulded into the one noble *emulation*, who shall fastest unravel his own *mischiefs*, and promote that *peace* he has hitherto disturb'd. This indeed were worthy to be the united design of all learned men; and were it once so, who knows how prosperous it might be? For though some *single attempts* have miscarried, yet probably one great *cause* why they do so, was because they were *single*. When one person comes with *pacifick arguments* to part an *enraged multitude*, let his reasons be never so convincing, they are not like to be much adverted to; the only *effect* is, that he who design'd himself the common *friend*, is taken as the common *enemy*; but where many associate in such a design, and nake a party for peace, their *numbers* give a considerableness to their *proposal*, and pepare for their *success*. And were there such a *combination* in order to the Church's quiet, it were more than possible they might undermine the *contrary attempts* of factin and discord.

The several dissenting parties among us ought to unite in those things wherein they all agree.

12. And why should not every man be *ambitious* to make one in this so *jous a confederacy*, and resolve most studiously to endeavour the *composing* the distractons of the Church, in which they may borrow something of *instruction* even from thir past guilts, and copy out their own *industry* to this better purpose? This is sure; or *disputes* had never so multiplied, had there not been a great deal of *unhappy diligce* in nourishing the seeds of them: Every *controverted tenet* has been heightned ad improved, till it have spawn'd a *numerous brood*, so that those who at first *differ'c* perhaps but in some *few* things, wrangle on, till at last they *agree* in *fewer*: No were the like industry applied the other *way*, it might sure do much to the changg the *whole scene*. If men would as nicely observe the principles of *agreement* tween *dissenting parties*, and with as much art and care seek to dilate and spread therr why might not they as much *overwhelm* our *differences*, as they have been *overwheled* by them? 'Tis sure that those universal *truths*, to which all parties assent, are,s the *clearest* for their evidence, so the most *important* for their consequence: Al why should not *these*, if rightly managed, be a more enforcing *motive* to unity, tn the more *singular opinions* (perhaps fancies) of some men, can be to discord? Ctainly would but our *Moses*'s try what this *rod* of *God* in their hand could do, theyould find it able to devour all *those* of the *magicians*. Would they like *Benhadad*'snbassadors, catch hold of every amicable *expression*, any thing that looks towardeace, and close in with it, they might probably see *effects*, beyond what can at a lance be expected. For sure *peace* is not such a *dry tree*, such a sapless unfertile thi, but that it might *fructifie* and *encrease* as well as *discord*, were there a just care tn to cherish and nourish it.

and study our Differences with a mind inclin'd rather to compose than widen them.

13. Indeed this design is the only *amulet* which can render it safe to look ir *controversies*, which are else apt to infuse a kind of *acrimony*, and *venome* into nr spirits; for we see many, whose *curiosity* at first brought them as unconcern'd *spetors*, do within a while engage with all earnestness in the *contest*; but those who st differences only with an aim of composing them, these have their thoughts detain'd and fixt, and so not left loose to the enticements of any party. *Aristotle* says, t on the hill *Olympus* the air is so subtil and piercing, that those who ascend thitl are forced to carry with them *wet spunges*, by that *moisture* somewhat to allay: extreme *tenuity* which otherwise would be deadly; and sure they that deal in *covrsies*, live in no less *corrosive an air*, and therefore had need make the like psion, and carry with them this *pacifick purpose*, as a *lenitive* and *emollient* against theectious *sharpness* they will there meet with.

The victory over our passions is preferable to all other conquests

14. And now how blessed a thing were it, if we could once thus follow things that make for peace? that the *numberless mutual enmities* which are nowong us, may all be reduced into *one*, that we may fight not against *single adverst*, but against *war* it self, and contend against *nothing* but *contention*? And sure victory here were worth millions of those petty conquests wherewith men plehemselves, and which acquire them so little of real advantage, that the sameount which was given of *Otho* and *Vitellius*, that the *war* would swallow up the and the *victory* the other, is too applicable to our *combatants*, who are like to qually unhappy in *defeat* or *success*. The *Spartans* had an order, that when an their *generals* had compassed his design by *policy* or *treaty*, he should sacrifice a; but when by *force* and *bloodshed*, a *cock* only; from the distant values of whblations *Plutarch* observes, how much they preferr'd the atchievements of i and sober *counsels*, before those of *strength* and *power*: But sure the disparitmore eminent in the present instance, where if we *fight*, we *wound* our brethrout if

we *unite*, we *destroy* our enemy; baffle and circumvent *Satan*'s master stratagem, and not only *worst* but *out-wit* him. Indeed this, and this only is worth our industry, whereas those *little defeats* we give each other, are like those in a *civil* war, wherein the *publick* is still sure to be a *loser*; upon which consideration the *Romans* allowed not their captains to triumph for such victories; and sure our *Christianity* is very ill bestowed on us, if it have made us so much worse natur'd, as to choose those ruinous conquests *at home*, before the most glorious and profitable ones *abroad*.

15. 'Twas *Abner*'s admonition to *Joab*, when he was in a hot pursuit of the *Israelites*, 2 Sam. 2. 26. *Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?* And sure 'tis more than time for our leaders to make the same reflection, and as *Joab* did there, call back the people from following their brethren: Nay indeed, would they but attend, they might hear themselves called back; the *great Captain* of their salvation sounding a *retreat* from these fatal skirmishes. *Xenophon* in the Institution of *Cyrus* tells us of one *Chrysanthus*, who in the heat of battle had his hand lift up to *strike* an enemy, but hearing in the very instant the trumpet sound a *retreat*, *stopt* his blow. A great sobriety of *courage*, so to shew more zeal to the *obeying* his general, than the *annoying* his enemy; and an instance of much *reproach* to our *spiritual combatants*, who have shewed themselves so much worse disciplin'd, as in spight of daily repeated *calls* to peace, still to *pursue* their hostility: But sure such an *insolence* is so inconsistent with the *pretence* they make of fighting God's battles, that they must either *reform* the one, or *disclaim* the other.

Our Governours ought to persuade their people to peace, and call them off from Contention,

16. And now if after all that hath or can be said of the *obligation*, *necessity* or *advantages* of peace, we are put to the Psalmist's complaint, *That there are still those that will make them ready to battle*: If men are of so untreatable a temper, that nothing can be obtain'd of them, what remains for those that are peaceable and faithful in *Israel*, but to *bewail* those mischiefs they cannot *redress*? If the Church must perish, at least to give her funeral rites, and if they cannot quench her *flames*, yet to bedew her *ashes* with their *tears*. 'Tis true, we cannot yet say she is quite *dead*; but though she *breaths* yet in a few pious peaceful souls, yet like a *palsied person*, she scarce *moves* a limb, she wants vigour to actuate the generality of her professors, and remains rather a *trunk* than a *body*: And sure, if there be truth in that physical Aphorism, which says, That *diseases which cross the temper and constitution of the patient are most dangerous*; we may well conclude her *desperate*, there being nothing more repugnant to the very elements and principles of her being, than those contentions under which she now *groans*.

and to bewail the mischiefs which they cannot redress;

17. Yet there is an *omnipotent power* to whom no difficulties are insuperable, an *unerring physician* who makes the most hopeless diseases but the triumph of his art. O let us resort to him, and invite his aids in the same pathetick form, wherewith he was solicited for *Lazarus*, *John* 11. 3. *Lord, behold she whom thou lovest is sick*: She for whose sake thou enduredst such contradiction of *sinners* against thy self, is now by the contradiction of her own *children*, languishing and expiring, she for whom thou pouredst out *thy blood*, lies weltring in her *own*; Lord, save or she perisheth: Were such petitions enforced and ingeminated by the daily breathings of humble devout hearts, who knows how prevalent they might be? In this sense also *Heaven* might suffer *violence*; nor is there any better countermine to all the *outrages* acted upon earth, than by making them thus reverberate in our *cries* and *prayers*.

and implore the aid of our Spiritual Physician for the curing of our Distempers.

18. And perhaps this consideration will draw us all, even the most *peaceful* of us, into the *guilt* of a negative accessariness to the present mischiefs. There are divers that dislike our *contentions*, and blame the *abettors*; but yet with such unconcern'dness and indifferency, as that wherewith we commonly talk of the *combustions* of foreign states, wherein we rather express our *judgment* than our *resentments*, and do make it more our *discourse* than our *concern*. And even of those who have in some degree laid it to heart, who is there that has not been some way wanting in the ardency, or frequency of his intercessions? Let every one seriously interrogate his own heart, and I fear 'twill witness to him, that his own *private concerns* are much apter to excite his *devotion*: Let us remember with what *passion* and *importunity* we invoke God in our particular exigents, and consider whether *we* are equally affected with *those* of the Church; hast thou been like *Hezekiah*, sick unto death? and hast thou with him wept sore, and vehemently solicited a recovery? Has thy *estate* been invaded by oppression, thy *fame* by slander and detraction? and hast thou with loud and earnest cries appealed to that *God to whom vengeance belongs*? Or hast thou been in that condition which is proverbial for setting men to their prayers? Hast thou like *Jonas* been in a storm, in minutely expectation of being swallowed up by the *waves*, if not the *whale*; and in this

Few lay to heart the distractions of the Church, or intercede to God on her behalf.

ecstasie of fear, when as *thy soul was*, as the Psalmist speaks, *even melted away because of the trouble*, hast cried unto the Lord, and even out-nois'd the billows in thy clamorous importunities for aid? Hast thou in all, or any of these estates been thus affected for thy self? Then remember whether thy *resentments* have been proportionable for *that* which is much better than thy self: If the no less imminent and pressing *dangers* of the Church have not as much awakened thy *fervor*, given as sharp and piercing an *accent* to thy prayers, thou must needs confess, thou hast fall'n short of what thou shouldest and mightest have done towards her rescue.

We ought to cry mightily to God, and deprecate those judgments that are upon us;

19. And if this inquisition be *impartially* made, who among us can plead *not guilty*? And therefore in reflections upon our past omissions, we are *in justice* oblig'd to redouble our *zeal*, to say over again our *tepid*, *heartless prayers*, and inflame them with a *coal* from the altar; an earnest affectionate concern for all that is holy, such as may prompt us to cry, and that mightily to God: We see the *Ninevites* could do it, when there was no visible approach of *danger*, but merely upon the *presage* of a stranger prophet, backt with the *consciousness* of their own guilt: I fear we more than equal them in the *latter* motive, I am sure we far exceed them as to the *former*. The *miseries* we are to deprecate being not only under denunciation and threat, but actually upon us, though withal so improveable, that after all the *black catalogue* our experience brings in, our fears meet us with the *bottomless prophetick menace*, Isay 5. 25. *For all this his anger is not turn'd away, but his hand is stretched out still.* 'Tis the usual œconomy of divine justice to make our *crimes* our *punishment*, and to give us up to *those ills*, which were at first our own *depraved choice*; and God knows we have too much reason to fear this may be our case: That we who have so perversly violated all the *bands* of unity, wantonly wrangled our selves out of all *inclinations* to peace, should never be able to resume them; that all those *gentle breathings* of grace, by which *exasperated passions* are to be cool'd and tempered, should be withdrawn, and we finally be given up to be dissipated by those whirl-winds our selves have rais'd; that *Christianity*, which we have made the stale and property to our irregular *appetites*, us'd only as *fig leaves* to hide our *shame*, should wither and shrink into nothing; and that *we*, who could not agree in what manner to *retain* it, should at last too well agree to *renounce* it.

and beseech the Divine Goodness to heal our very unwillingness to be healed.

20. This alas! as it is the *fearfullest*, so is it the *probablest* issue of our wild contentions, such as nothing but the miraculous effluxes of divine *clemency* can avert. O let us with all the *groans* and *tears* so deplor'd a condition exacts, address thither, importune the *Father of mercies* to pity *us*, who know not how to pity *our selves*, and that though we have cast off *all bowels*, yet that we may find them all concenter'd *in him*; that he will heal our *wounds*, and which of all others is the most desperate, our *unwillingness* to be healed; that the *spirit of peace* may over-shadow us, and impress on us the *dove like qualities* of meekness and gentleness; that he would rescue our religion from our profanation, not by taking *it* from us, but by conforming *us* to it: Finally, that he would do for us, not only above what we can *ask* or *think*, but beyond what we would *wish* or *chuse*, and not suffer us to *acquire* the miseries we so eagerly *pursue*.

We should qualifie our selves for this Intercession by Universal Holiness and Purity of Life.

21. This *divine interposition* alone is it that can possibly secure us, and indeed the suit amounts to no less, than that he will *force* upon us the blessing we *resist*, and do us good against our wills, which is so bold a *request*, that they had need be more than ordinary favourites that shall prefer it. Those *hands* must be very pure, that are lift up in such an *intercession*; and therefore all that undertake it are obliged to qualifie themselves for it, by purging out not only the *leaven* of malice and strife, but all other *filthiness* of the flesh and spirit: Without this we can never approve our selves to intercede in earnest; for what can be more ridiculous than to deprecate the *ruine* of Christianity by the *contentions* of other men, when our selves contrive it by some other vice of our own? This is not to desire it should *live*, but that none but we should *kill* it. 'Twill therefore concern those who wish the *peace* of the Church, to examine whether they do as much project for her *purity*; otherwise 'tis a mockery to pretend such a *jealous tenderness* for her. We have seen there are more ways than one, by which Christian practice may be evacuated, and it matters little from whence that wind blows that shipwrecks our piety. Yet 'tis not to be denied, that of all those *tempestuous blasts*, this of our *contentions* is the roughest and most fatal. 'Tis indeed not a single gust, but an encounter and strugling of several contrary winds; and God knows no *poetical description* can out do the *horror* of the storms they have rais'd; yet for ought I discern, there is nothing that is less vulgarly accused, which I must account to the reader as the *cause*, why I have detain'd him so long upon this head, and given it a *length* so unproportionable to the *preceding* parts of this discourse.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

The CLOSE.

A serious and pathetick exhortation to peace, and the use of all those means whereby it may be attain'd.

1. WE have now seen the unhappy riddle of the *unchristianness* of Christians unfolded, have observ'd the *originals* and *causes* of that which is too notorious to all the world in its *effects*. And though in this cursory view the *reader* is not to think he has any such *complete discovery*, as should supersede his own *farther inquisition*, yet as it may serve to *awaken*, so somewhat to *assist* his industry, give him some light and insight into the wiles of Satan; and by branding some of the chief of those *cheats* which have robb'd us of our *piety*, prepare for the detection of the *whole confederacy*: In the interim this *specimen* may serve to stop his wonder at the *ruinous estate* of Christianity, for though 'tis true that it was compacted of all the most *incorruptible materials*, had all the *harmony* of parts which the most exact *frame* and *composure* could give it, and so was qualified both for *strength* and *beauty* to have defied all the *injuries* of time; yet while she has so many *underminers*, 'tis not strange to see her in the *dust*, there being no *one* of these, especially that I last insisted on, which has not destructive *efficacy* enough, first to *deface*, and then to *ruin* her.

2. But it is but an unprofitable acquist to know the *authors* of our mischiefs, if we stop there, this enquiry being matter not of mere *curiosity*, but of the nearest and most pressing *interest*: We search not after malefactors for their *acquaintance*, but for their *punishment*, and our own *security*; and all our discoveries of this kind are vain, if we apply them not to that purpose. Let me therefore conclude with this *earnest petition* to the reader, That he will not to all the *native* defects of this *discourse*, add this *accidental* one, that it shall be perfectly *impertinent*; a mere waste of his time, and my own; which it will inevitably *prove*, if it engage him not in an *earnest prosecution* of those *delinquents* it hath impeacht; and in as earnest an endeavour to repair the *mischiefs* they have wrought.

3. In short, let every man deposit what he has here read, not with his *memory* only, but his *conscience*, let him there seriously ponder the excellency of that *holy vocation*, as St. *Paul* terms it, *Eph.* 4. 1. *to which he is called*: And then as seriously consider, *whether he have*, as the Apostle there exhorts, *walked worthy of it*; if he find he have not (as alas! who is there that has?) let him search out as the *particulars*, so the *causes* of his miscarriages: Diligently sift out those fallacies of *Satan*, or his own *heart*; those sly delusions which have made him act thus preposterously against all the convictions of common *reason*, natural *conscience*, or Christian *experience*; and when he has discovered, let him make no delay to rescue himself from their *treacheries*, but manfully break those *withs* and *cords* (which are too weak to hold any that will but in earnest remember, he is a *Nazarite*, a person consecrate to God) resolutely resist the *insidious caresses* of those *Delilahs* which will deliver not *himself* only, but the *ark* to the *Philistines*. Nor is he to content himself with his own *single escape*, but to propagate the *deliverance* to as many as he can; let him blazon and stigmatize those *impostors* (for 'tis a *combining* with them to *conceal* them) warn and caution *others* against those jugling artifices, by which *himself* was entrapped, and make his own shipwrecks a *sea-mark* for the securing the course of other passengers. This is the *effect* of Christ's admonition to St. *Peter*, *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*; and a piece of that fraternal charity we all owe to every particular soul, to whom we have opportunity to dispense it.

4. But besides that *private* obligation, it becomes a duty upon a higher, and more *publick* account, it being the only way to take off that *scandal* we have brought upon our *Religion*; which, as it was not contracted by the *irregularities* of one or two persons, but by associated and *common crimes*; so neither will it be removed by a few single, and private *reformations*: There must be combinations, and publick *confederacies* in *virtue*, to balance and counterpoise those of *vice*, or she will never recover that pristine honour, which she acquired by the general piety of her professors. In those primitive days there was such an abhorrence of all that was ill, that a *vicious person* was lookt on as a kind of *monster* or *prodigy*, and like a putrified member cut off, as being not only *dangerous*, but *noisome* to the body: But alas! the scene is so chang'd,

 that

that the *Church* is now made up of *such* as she would then have *cast out*; and 'tis now as remarkable an occurrent to find a *good* Christian, as it was there to see a *bad:* And since every thing is estimated not according to its rare and casual, but frequent usual operations, 'tis easie to conclude, that *Christianity* has lost as much in its *repute*, as it appears to have done in its *efficacy:* Nor will there be any way of repairing it, till we be generally rendred so malleable to its *impressions*, that our lives may attest its *force* and *energy*.

5. Nay indeed 'tis not only its *honour*, but its *being* is concern'd in it, active principles cease to *be*, when they cease to *act*. You cannot hinder the fire to burn, but by putting it out: And to *suppress* the operation of our Religion is indeed to *extinguish* it; at least to deprive it of its proper and specifick act: So that if it can be said to be, 'tis only by that abuse of speech which calls a dead or painted man, a man: It may perhaps be a *vizor* for the hypocrite, a *stale* for the ambitious, a *wash* or *tincture* for the covetous; but where it is *these*, it ceases to be *it self*. The *essence* and *being* of Christianity is *practice*; and according to that test and proof thereof, where almost can it be said to exist in the world? We have indeed some images and shadows of it: Some have taken its *picture*, but the *substance* and *solid body* is vanished, resolv'd into air, and seems sadly to have moraliz'd the poetick fable of *Sibyll's* being worn into a voice, *we have turn'd it into a mere noise and sound*; nay, which is worse, into an *echo*, that flattering complying voice, which reverberates every man's own language to him: Men dictate to their *Religion*, and then will needs persuade themselves and others, that their Religion dictates to *them*, will have the *rebounds* of their own fancy or lust pass for divine *Oracles*; so suborning this aery fantastick Christianity to legitimate those practices, which the real solid one forbids and execrates.

6. To this dismal forlorn estate have we brought that which was designed to bring us to bliss, herein far exceeding the barbarity of the brutish *Sodomites*; they would have violated the messengers of their *ruin*, but we those of our *safety:* We having not only neglected, but vilified and reproacht the *embassie* sent us from *Heaven*, and instead of *embracing* that purity and peace it recommended to us, have done our parts to make it *forgotten* that ever it was sent upon any such errand; and indeed so it is like to be, if some *heroick piety* do not revive its *memory*, and teach us to record it, not so much in our *books*, as *lives*: There, and there only it will be universally legible, there it would indeed appear, what it is in its own nature, *the power of God unto salvation.*

7. And now why should we not all emulously contend, who shall first put off that *ugly vizor* we have put upon our Religion, and restore it to its *native form?* especially considering that with its *beauty* we lose its *dowry* too; forfeit all those glorious *rewards* which it promises to them that preserve it *immaculate*. 'Tis only a *pure* and *undefiled Religion* that will invest us in those *white robes*, wherein we are to follow the *Lamb*. And sure those who have here endeavoured to *darken* and *extinguish* all the rays of spiritual light, that have lived as if they profest Christianity merely in spight to *defame* it, must never hope it shall bring them to *shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*, or procure them the *reward* of blameless souls. No, it promises no other *Crown* than that of *righteousness*, and therefore they that want the *righteousness*, must want the *crown* also; nay, besides that so inestimable a reversion, they lose all those *present joys* and *satisfactions* which true Christian practice would afford them, and which both in respect of the *intenseness* and *duration*, infinitely exceed the most *profuse sensualities* the world ever tasted.

8. These are interests that are sure important enough, and yet we must be *wooed* to consider them, nay, that does not prevail neither, but with a perverse coyness we *hold off*; all the solicitations and importunate *calls* of God are lookt upon as *artifices* and *designs*, as if he had some ends of his own to serve upon us, and (as the *Corinthians* suspected St. *Paul*) meant to make a gain of us; we treat with him as if he were the person to be advantaged, and barter for *Heaven* with such an indifference, as if *it* would want us more than *we* it; never considering that 'tis impossible for him to have any other *concern*, than that which his *compassion* to us creates, and the more *earnest* and *passionate* that is, the more it should excite our own *care*, it being the extremest degree of perverse folly, to *abandon* and *despise* our own interest, merely because a friend or patron *considers* and *prizes* it. And this *brand* must lye upon every one of us, who still refuse to discern *the things that belong to our peace*, after God has done so much to render them not only *visible*, but *attainable*.

9. What shall I say more, but conclude with Christ's passionate *wish*, that *we might in this our day understand the things that belong to our peace?* And O that the *Spirit* of peace

peace and light would descend among us, illuminate us with that true *practical wisdom*, which may convince us, that our *duty* and *interest* are the same thing under several forms, and that while we impiously cast off the *one*, we do as foolishly betray the *other*: That so those *inestimable advantages* our Christianity gives towards both, may not be thus madly lost, serve only *as a price in the hand of a fool, who hath no heart to it*, Prov. 17. 16. And to this end let us humbly and earnestly invoke the Father of lights to *illuminate* all those whom the god of this world hath *blinded*, that after he hath sent into the world the *Image* of his own eternal brightness, caused the *sun of righteousness* so long to shine upon us, it may not serve only to involve us in that most *dreadful condemnation*, which awaits those who love *darkness* more than *light*; but that answering the purpose of our *holy calling*, walking as *children of light*, we may vindicate that *Christian profession*, which we have so defamed, secure to our selves the light of *God's countenance* here, and that of his *glory* hereafter.

FINIS.

PRIVATE DEVOTIONS

REFERRING

To the ſeveral Parts of the before going TREATISE.

TO THE READER.

IT *is to be hoped, that as this Treatiſe entertained many, it had alſo an effect much more deſirable, though leſs comprehenſive to mend and convince ſome. And whilſt it gave an account of the general* DECAY OF CHRISTIAN PIETY *in the* preſent *age, has alſo invited a few at leaſt to its purſuit and ſervice. Upon theſe hopes the* Author *has been perſuaded to add this ſhort* ſpecimen *of* PRIVATE DEVOTIONS, *that if the ſober and conſidering reader ſhall at any time find his heart toucht and ſoftned, he may have in readineſs wherewith to actuate his holy flames, and aſſiſt him in his addreſſes to the throne of Grace.*

O BLESSED Lord, who art infinitely holy and happy in thy ſelf, and from whom alone we derive the poſſibilities of being either; we proſtrate our ſelves before thee, in an humble adoration of thy abundant goodneſs, and a juſt confuſion at our own deteſtable ingratitude: We were aliens and enemies to thee by our corrupt affections, and ungodly works, yet even to us haſt thou been reconciled, nay, bought the atonement with the precious blood of thy dear Son: Thou haſt ſent him to be the propitiation for our ſins; and (which is no leſs mercy) to be the ſubduer of them too, ſenteſt him by his divine example and admirable precepts, to bleſs us in turning every one of us from his iniquities. Thou haſt given us a law ſo perfect, ſo excellent, as renders our obediences their own reward, and yet ſuperaddeſt alſo an eternal weight of glory to be its future retribution: And leſt our brutal temper ſhould not be attracted by all this, thou haſt hedg'd up our way with thorns, annext a preſent uneaſineſs, and ſubſequent danger to our deviations, ſo by the menaces of Hell eſſaying to fright us into Heaven: And to actuate and enliven all theſe methods, thou addeſt the internal aſſiſtances of thy Grace and Spirit to excite us to good, to reſtrain and avert us from ill, and finally advance us to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. And now, O Lord, after all theſe obligations, all theſe aids, what manner of perſons ought we to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs? But alas! to our eternal reproach, we have ſignaliz'd our ſelves by contrary practice; blaſphem'd that holy Name whereby we are call'd, and by our enormous lives ſcandaliz'd our profeſſion, and made it as eminent for vice, as it ſhould have been (and once was) for virtue. Our knowledge of thy will ſerves only to inform us, wherein we may moſt oppoſe it, and while we call our ſelves Chriſtians, we commit ſuch things as are not ſo much as named among the Gentiles. Nay, O Lord, ſo little do we retain of the power of godlineſs, that the greateſt part of men have now caſt off the very form, deny the Lord that bought them, trample upon all that is ſacred; and not only think, but loudly ſay, There is no God. Thus inſtead of regulating our manners by our faith, we model our faith by our manners, and reap nothing by our Chriſtianity, but the guilt of apoſtaſie, and the fearful expectation of that fiery indignation which awaits thoſe who have thus trampled under foot the Son of God, and done deſpight to the Spirit of Grace. And now, O Lord, when the foundations are caſt down, what can the righteous do? What counterpoize can the groans and tears of thoſe few who mourn in Sion be to ſuch general, ſuch daring impieties? Yet, O God, thou haſt in all ages ſtrangely condeſcended to the interceſſion of thy ſervants. O bow thy heaven again, and come down, and hear the prayers of thoſe who deſire to fear thy Name; and let them not only deliver their own ſouls, but obtain mercy for this perverſe generation, even ſuch a mighty grace as may

yet reduce us. O thou who didst at first call us out of darkness into thy marvellous light, recall us now from that worse darkness, wherein we have involved our selves, put thy laws anew in our hearts, and write them in our minds: And after so many years, so many ages of being call'd Christians, let us at last begin to be so. Revive, O Lord, that primitive zeal and sanctity, which may purifie us to thy self a peculiar people zealous of good works. And O thou blessed Mediator, who prayedst for thy first-crucifiers, intercede also for us, who have under the name of disciples crucified thee afresh: And though we have nothing to say for our selves, cannot pretend that we knew not what we did; yet let thy stripes and wounds, thy cross and passion plead for us. Thou didst once lead captivity captive, O stir up thy strength again, and let not Satan now triumph in thy spoils, and desecrate thy Church, which thou hast purchased with thine own blood. O let thy blessed Spirit breath again upon us, that even these dry bones may live in thy sight: Let him so effectually convince and reprove, illuminate and excite us, that we may cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, walk worthy of that holy vocation wherewith we are called, and be capable of those glorious rewards which are prepared for those who fight a good fight, finish their course, and keep the faith: Where we shall cease to grieve, to suffer, and to sin; but never cease to live and to be happy, singing perpetual *Hallelujahs* to Him that sits upon the throne, to the Holy Spirit, and to the Lamb for evermore.

A LITANY.

O GOD the Father of Heaven, the God of Angels and of men, the Father of compassions, of consolation and life;

Have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

O God the Son, the eternal well-beloved Son, by whom the sinful race of men become the Sons of God;

Have mercy upon us, &c.

O God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of comfort, of holiness and grace, by whom we receive the adoption, and the earnest of our hope;

Have mercy upon us, &c.

O Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, distinguisht as in person, so in the various dispensations of the work of our Redemption; united as in essence, so in the acts of kindness and compassion to men;

Have mercy upon us, &c.

That it may please thee to create in us clean hearts, and to renew a right spirit within us, to rescue us from all the deceits of the world, the devil, and our own hearts;

We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.

That it may please thee to grant, that all who have been baptiz'd into Christ, may indeed put on Christ; seriously weigh, and industriously answer the obligation of their holy calling; not rest in the form and outside of religion, whilst by a wretchless inconsideration they enervate the power and efficacy thereof;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee so to guide our consideration, that we do not thereby so ensnare our selves, entertain those delusions which flatter us with hopes of reward, without performing duty; but that by an impartial advertency to all thy sacred dictates, we may be engag'd to a constant, entire obedience, and work out our salvation with fear and trembling;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to open our eyes, that we may see the wondrous things of thy law, to convince us that it is holy, just and good, sweeter than hony and the hony-comb, and that all our objections to it arise only from our being carnal and sold under sin;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to remove all our carnal prejudices, and vicious prepossessions; and to enable us to measure thy precepts by the rules of right reason, and an illuminated conscience, according to the analogy of thy holy faith once delivered to the Saints;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to inspirit us by thy grace, that we may not only approve, but obey thy commands, conquer all the discouragements of sloth or vice, and chear-fully

fully set to the practice of Christian duty; that so we may experimentally find how sweet the Lord is;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to put thy fear in our hearts, that we may never depart from thee, but equally obey thee in all things, not indulging to any favourite sin, but entirely resign and captivate every thought to the obedience of Christ;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to take these stony hearts out of us, and to give us hearts of flesh; such as may melt at the apprehension of our sins and thy displeasure;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to endue us with a right judgment, that we deceive not our selves with shews and formalities of repentance; but bring forth indeed fruits meet for it;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to awake us from our supine and dangerous dependence on a future repentance, and make us in this our day discern and embrace the things belonging to our peace, so answering thy present calls, that we may not at last call, when thou shalt only laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to possess our Souls with a just reverence, and right apprehensions of thy essence and attributes, that we may not form our belief of thee by our own fancies or wishes, but by those revelations thou hast given of thy self in thy word;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to restrain our bold curiosity in prying into thy counsels and decrees, and make us wise unto sobriety, reserving secret things unto the Lord our God, and studying the revealed ones for the regulating of our lives;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to give us such an awe of thy justice, that we may fear to provoke it, not expecting thou shouldst repent of thy judgments, when we do not of our sins, nor fancying that any milder vengeance attends our final obstinacy, than unquenchable fire;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to grant us such a sense of thy mercy, that we may never say there is no hope, or excuse our incorrigibleness by our desperation; but that the goodness of God may lead us to repentance, yet let us never so presume on it, as to sin that Grace may abound;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to enable us with all due regard to observe, and humility to adore, the dispensations of thy providence, not pretending to fathom thy secret intendments, but endeavouring so to comply with all signal discoveries of thy purposes towards us, that what thou designest for our wealth, may not be to us an occasion of falling;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee, that from every event, whether national or personal, we may still infer the obligation and necessity of turning from our sins; that gratitude for past mercies may allure us to good, and fear of impending judgments may drive us from evil;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to inspire the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity and concord, that there may be no divisions among us; but that we may be perfectly joyn'd together in the same mind, and in the same judgment;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee, whereinsoever any are contrary minded, to reveal thy truth to them; and in the interim so to allay those heats our differences have caus'd, that amidst the diversities of judgment we may keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;

We beseech thee, &c.

That it may please thee to deliver us from all the unhappy effects of our contentions, and to purge us from all the criminous causes of them, and so to heal our breaches, that *Jerusalem* may again become a city at unity in it self;

We beseech thee, &c.

That

That it may please thee to grant that we no longer dote about questions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, railing, evil surmises; but so busie our selves in practick duties, that we may not fear, when our Lord comes, to be found so doing;
We beseech thee, &c.

Son of God we beseech thee to hear us.

O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world;
Grant us thy peace.

O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world:
Have mercy upon us.

O Christ hear us.

Lord have mercy upon us.
Christ have mercy upon us.
Lord have mercy upon us.

OUR *Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name*, &c.

O Lord deal not with us after our sins.
Neither reward us after our iniquities.

ALmighty God, who shewest to them that be in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return to the way of righteousness: Grant unto all them that be admitted to the fellowship of Christ's Religion, that they may eschew those things which be contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same, through *Jesus* Christ our Lord.

O Merciful Saviour, who so lovedst thy Church, as to give thy self for her, look again on her with thy compassionate eyes, who now needs a second redemption; even a rescue from her self, from the unnatural issue of her own bowels. Lord thou seest the miserable state to which she is reduced by our wild contentions, that she has at once lost her purity, and her peace, and is become an *Aceldama*, a field of blood. Lord where is thy pity and the sounding of thy bowels towards her, are they restrained? O remember thy old loving kindness, the love of thy espousals, and as thou wert once a Lamb to expiate her guilts, so be thou now a Lion to vindicate her wrongs; strike a dread into the hearts of all, who have contributed to her ruine, and make them know that whoso touches her, toucheth the apple of thine eye. O let not her still sink under the oppression of our sordid designs, and irregular appetites, nor be devour'd by those who pretend to guard her. Give her pastors after thine own heart; let her Priests be cloath'd with righteousness, and wash their hands in innocence, before they compass thine Altar. O let not any vain ambition for themselves make them expose and prostitute the honour of their God; no affectation of that knowledge which puffeth up, divert them from that charity which only edifieth: Grant that the interest of Religion may still be uppermost in their hearts, and never veil to secular ends, nor the pretence of truth cloak any exorbitant passion. Nay, O Lord, refine even their zeal, and make it serve to kindle, not consume their charity: And to inspirit them with such an unwearied industry, that they may always abound in the work of the Lord, diligently take heed to those flocks, over whom the Holy Ghost has made them overseers, never turning aside to vain jangling, or striving about words to no profit. And to all who are under their charge, give meekness to submit to those who by thy appointment watch their souls; suppress all prejudices and faction, and let none be puffed up for one against another, but grant that by a due attendance on their callings, both as men and Christians, they may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. And, Lord, let both priest and people so follow after the things that make for peace, that we may adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour, take off the scandal our divisions have given to those that are without, and again evidence our relation to the Prince of peace: And O that our ways were made thus direct; but alas! how little disposition have we towards it? This change must be only the work of that mighty power, which is able to subdue all things to it self: And yet, O Lord, with what face can we beg of thee to force us to that happiness, which we still resolve to resist? What can we then say unto thee, O thou Preserver, thou Redeemer of men, who have put our selves beyond all the ordinary methods of thy grace? We can only lay our selves at thy feet; display our misery, and leave thee to consider thine own compassion: O let that move thee to do for us whatever our wretched estate is in need of; O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, consider and do it, if not for ours, yet for thy Name's sake: Thou art *Jesus* a Saviour, save thy people from their sin, and let us not slide back by a perpetual backsliding; thou art the head of the Church, O abandon not thy body; carest thou not that

she perish? Turn thee again, O Lord, renew her days as of old, sanctifie and cleanse her, that thou mayst again present her to thy self a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, and if she must still be militant, let it no longer be within her self, but against spiritual wickednesses, the ruler of the darkness of this world; till at last thou utterly beat down Satan under her feet, and translate her from this state of warfare, to that of triumph and bliss in the kingdom of thy Father; which thou O blessed *Jesus* hast purchased with thy Blood, and sealed by thy Spirit. To which blessed Trinity be ascrib'd all praise, honour, and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

O Most gracious Lord, who out of thy boundless compassion to thy creatures, art never wanting in any means that may draw them to thy self, we the unworthiest of them desire to give glory to thee, in a hearty acknowledgment that thou hast in a most eminent and peculiar manner abounded to us of this nation, afforded us all the methods that might either force or allure us to obedience. Lord, thou wert pleased to keep us many years under thy chastening hand, thou broughtest us into the snare and laydst trouble upon our loyns, and didst at once upbraid and punish our voluntary slaveries to our own lusts, by giving us up a prey to those of others: And when those judgments which should have melted, serv'd but to harden us; when we seem'd emulous to have our sins out-vye thy plagues, as they had before thy mercies, what could we then expect, but to find a judgment worthy of God? Such an irreversible ruine, as might render us an hissing and astonishment to the whole earth? But when we were thus ripen'd for thy greatest severity, then didst thou, O Lord, prevent us with the blessings of thy goodness, miraculously interpose for our rescue, and by such undiscernible ways return the captivity of our Sion, that we were deliver'd like them that dream. This, O Lord, was so stupendous, so amazing a mercy, that nothing can be more admirable, but only our prodigious ingratitude: Thou hast signally attested thy self to be a God that dost wonders, and yet we, who enjoy the benefit of them, neither consider them as wonders, nor thee as God; but atheistically defie that providence by which we subsist. Thou hast restored to us our solemn worship, and we now say what a weariness is it? can seldom afford it our presence, and seldomer our hearts. Thou hast broken the yoke of usurping oppressors, and we murmur no less at our lawful Governours, as if all that we desired to reap by the exchange, were the guilt of speaking evil of dignities. Thou hast freed us from the burden of unlawful imposed oaths; and we daily rend thy sacred name by voluntary impertinent ones. Thou hast delivered our estates from the rapine of others, and we sacrifice them to our own riot, and are never the more open-handed to our poor brethren for all thy munificence to us. Thou hast restor'd us the liberty of our persons, and we proclaim licence to our lusts. These are the degenerous and base returns we have made; thus, O thus have we requited the Lord, and by it have again forc'd thee to resume thy scourge, and by a succession of signal judgments attest thy displeasure. And yet, O Lord, who regardeth the power of thy wrath? Who is there that repenteth him of his ways, or saith, What have I done? Never any soil made so ill return to so much husbandry, and since we bring forth nothing but briars and thorns, we may surely conclude we are nigh unto cursing: And, O Lord, what can we plead to avert the sentence, who are as far from penitence as innocence, or how can we pray against that vengeance, which we make it our business to pull down? Nay, O Lord, shouldst thou as miraculously prolong, as thou didst restore our peace, yet what will that avail us, if it serve but to set us at greater hostility with thee? Blessed Lord, there is but one mercy that we are capable of, and that is the melting our hearts, and if that cannot be done, but by casting us into a yet more fiery furnace; Lord do that or any thing with us, so we may come out vessels of honour meet for thy service. But yet, O Lord, if thy gentler methods may have any effect, be pleas'd to continue thy long-suffering; and though we have no pretence to mercy, yet do thou assert thine own work, be merciful because thou hast been so, and suffer us not to destroy what thou hast so miraculously preserv'd. Finally, O Lord, dispense to us whatsoever thou seest most apt to reduce us; and that thy outward applications may be no longer in vain, enforce and enliven them by thy inward; and by the sweet insinuations of thy blessed Spirit, subdue our obstinate perverseness; and give us at last such grace, as we may not turn into wantonness. O thou to whom all things are possible, who hast done such wonderful things for us, work a yet greater miracle in us, and of a profane, ungrateful, licentious nation, make us an holy people unto thy self, that all ranks and conditions of men may as universally and industriously combine to propitiate, as they have to provoke thee; that so by bringing forth fruits of repentance, we may escape thy wrath both temporal and eternal. Grant this for his sake, who died to work that deliverance for us, *Jesus* Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

FINIS.

THE GENTLEMAN'S CALLING.

Written by the Author OF THE Whole Duty of Man.

1 Cor. vii. 24.

Ἕκαστος ἐν ᾧ ἐκλήθη, ἀδελφοὶ, ἐν τούτῳ μενέτω παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ.

LONDON:

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THE PREFACE.

1. THE *authority of Custom hath so much a more general prevalency than that of* Truth*; that he that shall adventure to assault that with this, may be thought not to have well digested the prudent caution of our Saviour, Luke* 14. 31. To sit down and consider, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand; *for doubtless such, and much greater, is the odds between these two litigants. And to the imputation of this unwariness I cannot but foresee the present design very liable.*

Custom more prevalent than Truth

2. *Gentility has long since confuted* Job's *aphorism,* Man is born to labour, *and instead thereof has pronounced to its clients the rich man's* requiem, *Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. A* Gentleman *is now supposed to be only a thing of Pleasure, a creature sent into the world, as the* Leviathan *into the deep,* to take his pastime therein, (*and the better to compleat the parallel, to devour his underlings too*) *and then 'twill be no wonder, if it be adjudged a ridiculous solœcism to attempt to define his* Calling, *whose very essence is thought to consist in having none. Nay, perhaps it will be deemed not only absurd, but malicious, a levelling project of robbing him of his birth-right, of degrading him from those privileges which belong to his quality, and of moulding him again into that vulgar mass, from which divine providence and humane laws have distinguished him. But from this jealousie I dare trust the ensuing leaves to be their own vindicators.*

Gentlemen are seldom bred up to any thing but their Pleasure.

3. *I have been no unconcerned (much less insulting) spectator of the depression the* Gentry *have fallen under in these latter years, but have paid them my just tribute of compassion: Yet I confess I think those scarce worthy a regret, in comparison with those voluntary descents too many of them have made from true worth and virtue. 'Tis sure a far less deplorable spectacle to see a* Gentleman *spoiled of his fortune by his conscience, than his luxury; and to behold him under the stroke of the headsman, than under those more infamous executioners, his lust, or intemperance. Yet I fear if the martyrologie even of these suffering times were scanned,* Venus *and* Bacchus *would be found to have had many more martyrs, than* God *and* loyalty.

The vices Gentlemen degrade them more than their calamities,

4. *But I confess it an impertinence thus to balance the two mischiefs of doing and suffering ill, since 'tis certain the latter is to be resolved into the former, and has no existence of it self, but what it derives from that. Punishments are but the results of sin: And therefore whatever malignity is in the effect, becomes entirely chargeable upon the cause, and we are to look upon our vice not only as our greatest, but our only unhappiness. This consideration shews us the source of all our* Sufferings, *and is it self no less obvious than those; though one would think it as concealed as the head of* Nilus, *that should only observe how many other originals of our calamities are assigned, whilst this is scarce dreamt of. This* Jonah *is suffered to sleep securely in the ship, while her more innocent fraught is* cast over board, *Jonah* 1. 5. *Every the least sparkle from without is charged as an incendiary, when alas! like* Ætna, *our own bowels send out that fire, which has so near reduced us to ashes. But as in diseases we account the discovery of the cause the first and most necessary step to the cure; so certainly is it here, the conviction of our guilt is a most indispensable preparative towards the ease of our pressures, and we must be* heavy laden *in the Christian sense,* Matt. 11. 28. *before we shall cease to be so in the civil.*

and though seldom taken notice of, yet are one main cause of their Sufferings;

5. *But I fear men proceed in this affair rather like mountebanks, than good physicians, use some palliating medicines to allay the effects, or perhaps anodynes to stupefie the patient, and wholly neglect the root of the malady. Nor do I appropriate this error to the* Gentry, *'tis too visible that all sorts and qualities have too just a claim to it, to let any one go away with the inclosure. But because the present design makes them my peculiar province, I shall, waving all others, address my self at this time to them only, with this most passionate*

and therefore ought to be destroyed and cut off as the troublers of our *Israel.*

request,

request, that they would not use that cruelty to themselves, for which Amalek *stands branded towards* Israel, *Deut.* 25. 18. *by their persevering impieties smite and destroy those feeble and faint remains of their former felicities; but that they would now at last seriously advert to this their so great and important concernment, and pitch upon the true* Achan, *that has thus long* troubled their Israel. *And that being done, that story directs the next step of the process, even the bringing him to execution, cutting that off, which will else infallibly bring down a fatal excision upon themselves. Nor is this to be deferred, for alas! the disease is come to too great a height, too dangerous a* Crisis, *to admit any delay of the remedy.*

The greatness of our judgments and nearness to destruction ought to be an argument to repent of our sins,

6. *When* Egypt *had smarted under a succession of miraculous plagues for detaining the* Israelites, *the servants of* Pharaoh *importune him to release them, and conclude their advice with this pathetick enforcement,* Knowest not thou yet that *Egypt* is destroyed? *And God knows I may but too properly give the same edge to mine; for alas!* Gentlemen, *are not your estates wasted, your privileges violated, your splendors eclipsed, your persons restrained, your families broken and shattered, your dignities trampled upon by the meanest of the vulgar, and finally your selves quite transposed in your station, now made the* tail who were once the head, *Deut.* 28. 44. *and is it not yet time to dismiss those Sins which are the authors of all this? If you are still of* Pharaoh's *mind, and resolve to retain them, you are certainly no less obstinate than he, but much more irrational. He had somewhat of visible advantage to tempt him to detain the* Israelites, *they were his slaves, wrought hard at his work, built him cities. But how far is that from the case here! they are not your slaves, but your task-masters, which you are so unwilling to part with, those that set you to the vilest and most servile drudgeries, and are so far from bringing you in profit, that I may boldly make the Apostle's challenge,* Rom. 6. 21. What fruit have you had of those things? *And doubt not the only account you can bring in of your harvest, must be the inventory of your miseries. We are witnesses of many houses, many cities they have demolish'd and laid waste, but we have no structure of theirs to shew, but a* Babel *of confusion.*

which have endanger'd the ruin of the Church, and places of God's worship;

7. *But alas! these your secular ruins are but their modest and petty outrages. Take another view of them, and it will, like* Ezekiel's *vision,* Ezek. 6. 8. *present you with more and* greater abominations than these, *even the* abomination of desolation in the holy place. *Your Sins have not only desolated your own houses, but God's.* That beauty of his ornament *which he set in* majesty, *Ezek.* 7. 20. *hath by these your detestable things been exposed to spoil and pollution. We are not yet grown so old in our miseries, as to have out-worn the aggravation of remembring our happier estate. And how sad, how wounding a contemplation is it to compare the past and present condition of* this *Church? When the* Temple *was rebuilded, the joy of that restoration could not suppress the grief of those who remembred the so much more glorious fabrick of the first; but they laid the foundation in their tears, the text says, They* wept with a loud voice, *Nehem.* 3. 12. *But what tears, what ejaculations can be bitter or loud enough for us, who are to lament not partial and imperfect repairs, but total ruins and vastations? that see the materials of our* Sion *now reduced to dust and rubbish, who once saw them happily compacted, built together as a* city at unity in it self?

and ought therefore to draw forth our zeal and indignation against them.

8. *And while we thus* remember Sion, *and are our selves* by the waters of Babylon, *'tis sure but proper we* sit down and weep, *bid, as those captives,* Psal. 137. *a solemn adieu to all entertainments of joy and pleasure. And would God we all, particularly you to whom I now speak, did as exactly parallel them in this sad and pious resentment, as we do in the motives of it, that so your quarrel to sin might be accended to its full height, as that which robs you not only of your spiritual, but (that which many of you have more gust of) your carnal joys also! 'Tis your sins, I would I could say yours alone, which have been the persecuting* Sauls, *that have thus made* havock of the Church. *The* securities, profaneness *and* licentiousness *of your prosperous days made the first breaches in her walls: And now the* impenitence *and incorrigibleness of your calamitous, like the* Edomites, cry Down with her, down with her even to the ground. *'Twas amongst the Jews a* capital guilt *to* curse *a* parent, *and shall it now pass for an easie, or no crime, not only to curse, but destroy our common mother, to abet and maintain those troops which thus defie, yea, invade her? O why should you not at last recal your exiled piety, and assume a holy and becoming indignation against these her cruel, her implacable enemies?*

Every man must acknowledge that his own sins have had a hand in the publick calamity:

9. *But this you cannot be supposed to do, whilst you arraign only* other *mens sins, and leave your* own *out of the indictment. I doubt not, many of you do with displeasure, perhaps more than enough, charge her ruin upon the immediate instruments, accuse the bold intrusion of ignorant teachers of having depraved her* doctrine; *ambition and envy of impatient*

impatient inferiors, of subverting her discipline; *the pride and faction of busie spirits, of disturbing her* peace; *the greedy avarice of sacrilegious persons, of devouring her* patrimony. *And these I shall not deny to have been the* weapons *that thus have mortally wounded her. But let it be remembred, that these were wielded and whetted by the more general impieties, from whence they borrowed their destructive power. And therefore to* transfer *the guilt here, is but the artifice of slaying* Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon, *which you know acquitted not* David *from being a murderer. No, God knows, here lies a carkass of a poor bleeding* Church, *but which of you our elders are qualified for the purgation the law assigns in that case,* Deut. 21. 8. *which of you can say,* Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it?

10. *Yet the less capable you are of thus* washing your hands in innocence, *the greater need you have to wash them in* penitence, *and therefore since as you are* sons *to this* mother, *the office of* avenger of blood *devolves on you;* O bring forth fruits of repentance, *by discharging that part faithfully; drag out these* criminals *which have taken* sanctuary *in your breasts, and there dwell securely, as in a* city *of* refuge, *and* hew them in pieces, *as* Samuel *did* Agag before the Lord. *And as your incentives to this are infinitely greater and more pressing than in other* murders, *so will the effects also vastly transcend those of common justice. That only revenges, but this may repair the mischief, recal the vital spirits, and reunite the scattered limbs of this mangled body. Such an omnipotency is there in sincere repentance, that it is able even to effect a resurrection. O that you would be ambitious of working this miracle, and by this pious prodigie beget your* mother, *that you would keep so long over her ashes, till that moisture had rendred them* prolifical, *and you see her spring out of her* urn.

And the less innocent we are, the more humble and penitent we ought to be;

11. *This, this is your only way of reversing that extirpating* decree, *which these* Hamans (*your sins*) *have procured. And if you neglect this,* Mordecai's *menace to* Hester *will be too applicable to you: If God in his unfathomable mercy should* cause deliverance *and enlargement* to arise from some other place *to this poor desolate Church, yet your selves can expect nothing but destruction. If you have no sense of the desolations of* Sion, no pity to see her in the dust, *but still choose to cherish those impieties which have brought her thither; yet even they will at the last avenge her quarrel, bring you those miseries, the sense whereof it will be impossible for you to avoid, or extinguish.*

which is the only way to prevent both our own ruine, and that of the Church's too.

12. *For alas! to represent your sins to you as the originals merely of temporal, whether private or publick ruins, is to give you too fair and flattering a pourtraicture of them: These are but the light prelusory skirmishes to a more dismal slaughter, the prologue to the fatal tragedy. Take their full character from the Apostle,* Rom. 6. 21. The end of those things is death, *even death eternal. It is our usual comfort against the persecutions of men, that they can pursue us no farther than to the grave: There, as* Job *speaks,* the weary be at rest. *But this tyrant in our own breasts has no such limits to its malice, but then especially begins, when all other cruelties cease, tortures infinitely by the gnawings of that* worm which never dies, *and the scorchings of that* fire which never *shall be* quenched.

Sin is the cause both of temporal and eternal misery;

13. *And now who can sufficiently wonder at the infatuation, that you should demur upon the dismissing of so treacherous a guest, that you should cherish this viper in your bosoms, which you already feel eating your bowels, devouring all your temporal felicities, and yet takes those but in the way to your heart, your more precious and eternal part? 'Tis the common maxim even of those that receive advantage by the perfidiousness of others, to love the treason, but hate the traitor. But here is that rule quite inverted; you hate the treason, are impatient of the afflicting consequences of your sin, yet love the traitor, hug that in your closest embraces. The Apostle indeed forewarns us of the* deceitfulness of sin, Heb. 3. 13. *but sure this is a pitch beyond that; this is not deceit, but inchantment, some powerful* philtrum *it must needs be, that can thus make men in love not only with deformity, but disease.*

which to cherish and indulge is the greatest folly and madness in the world.

14. *But all the* magicians of Egypt are not able to stand before Moses, *this magick is not so irresistible, but that reason and religion will yield you countercharms able to disinchant you, if you will but suffer them to come in to your aid. Do but once step out of the Devil's circle, the actual vertiginous pursuit of your sinful appetites, and give your faculties some intermission, so much breath from that hot chace, as may qualifie them for a calm considerate view of other things, and then 'tis certain you will discern, that Virtue has a much more ravishing appearance, infinitely more delectable and enamouring than all the Devil's* opticks *could put upon your highest and most gustful sensualities. Do you only bestow some attentive looks upon her; let her once in at your eyes, and then leave her to make her own way to your heart. And this is sure a very moderate request; that you will but vouchsafe to look upon what is thus amiable. And with what pretence can you*

Virtue is naturally more amiable and delightful than Vice.

deny

deny it? You who to gaze on those transitory beauties which are only your snares, stick at no difficulty, will be content to come (those of you that have no other motives) even to Church upon that errand: O do not here put off your curiosity, where alone it may avail you, but rather take this opportunity of hallowing that (hitherto profane) part of your temper.

The Devil is apt to beget Prejudice in mens minds against Religion.

15. *It has been none of the Devil's meanest or unluckiest arts to infuse Prejudices into mens minds against* Christian practice, *by representing it in the most averting* forms. *He* changes shapes *with it, and as he transforms himself into an* angel of light, *so he does this into one of* darkness, *makes it appear a state of the most* dismal sadness *and* horror, *a* region *of* Antipodes *to all joy and chearfulness. And how much more ready men are to take the* Devil *at his* word, *than Christ at his, who professes his* yoke easie, *and his* burden light, *apears too visible in the general averseness those have to* piety, *who never so much as tried it, but take up implicit confused* Prejudices *against it, and retain those as fast, as if they were the product of many years costly experiences. And 'tis to be feared, these have taken the deepest root in the richest soil, they seeming no where more to flourish, than among you of the highest quality. Yet sure, of all others, you are most obliged to eradicate them, they implying such a gross injustice, as any ingenuous mind must be ashamed of.*

None are fit to judge of Religion, till they have made trial thereof.

16. *You will your selves readily pronounce that* judge *not only corrupt, but impudent, that condemns a person whose cause he never heard: Yet if you will but reflect, you will find your own verdict rebound upon your selves with a* Tu es homo; *for 'tis evidently your case here. It is time for you therefore to be so just, if not to virtue, yet to your own reputations, as to retract that condemnatory sentence you have past upon her, and put on so much at least of the* form *of justice, as to give her a fair trial. But this you cannot do by hearing the tongues of men and Angels plead for her, none but herself can manage her cause, you must admit her into your society and converse, take her into such a familiarity, as may bring her within distance of your observation, before you pronounce of her. In short, if you will indeed render your selves competent judges, whether a virtuous* life *be a pleasant or a dismal thing, enter upon it, and let your own experiences be your informers.*

17. *I cannot suspect the* age *so degenerous, as not to believe there are divers particular persons among you, who have made the experiment, and to their testimony I dare appeal, and doubt not they will from judges turn advocates, and recommend it to you; and sure you will have no cause in this instance to wave your wonted privilege of being tried by your* peers, *to except against their judgment in the* case, *who being placed in equal circumstances with you, must be supposed to understand your utmost temptations to vice, from whence alone all the seeming difficulties and uneasinesses of virtue do arise.*

Virtue is in its own nature active, and an enemy to Idleness,

18. *It were the work of many volumes to describe the several distinct advantages towards a pleasant being, which are wrapt up in this one comprehensive Felicity. I shall instance only in that to which the ensuing* Tract *particularly relates, and that is, that it furnishes you with a succession of very agreeable and chearful imployments. Virtue is of a busie and active nature, and as in its several operations it has an opposition to all the several sorts of vice, so in its very constitution and principle it bears an avowed antipathy to that one fertile seminary of most other sins,* Idleness; *and sure the rescuing you from that is no* contemptible *benefit. For though you seem to challenge it as a considerable part of your inheritance, that you may live and do nothing, and are very tenacious of that claim; yet 'tis most evident, that what you contend for as your privilege, your selves esteem your burden, yea so much so, that to be rid of it you cast away estate, health, soul and all for company, imploy your selves the most ruinously, rather than endure to be idle; nay, quite confute your own pretensions to ease, by those laborious and toilsome vices which you are fain to call pleasures, to render them tolerable, but have certainly no pretence to that title on any other score, but that they keep you doing.*

and affords many pleasing innocent divertisements.

19. *And now what more grateful office can possibly be done for men in this condition, than to shew them how they may free themselves of this load without contracting a worse? I mean the guilt of those things which like* Rehoboam *converts* whips *into* scorpions, *yet are now fain to be resorted to as the only instruments of their relief. And this a Christian* life *will be sure to do for you; it will constantly provide you with innocent divertisements, nay much more, it will give you business so excellent, and worthy the dignity of your nature, so noble and answerable to the splendor of your qualities, so every way agreeable to the aims of rational men, that you will have cause to acknowledge with our Church, that God's* service is perfect freedom

20. I

20. *I shall not undertake to give you a particular view of all the severals of these employments; those* precepts *of the Gospel, which assign your tasks, do sufficiently inform you of the nature and excellency of them; my whole scheme is comprised in that one, which directs an attendance on that Calling wherein God hath placed men, and therefore I am to treat only of those particular* Duties *which are incumbent on you as* Gentlemen, *and therein shew you that considered* as *such, you have a* Calling, *and so free you of that reproach and misery of being* unprofitable burdens *of the earth, and then evince to you also that* that *Calling is so far from implying any thing of real toil or uneasiness, that it is only an art of refining and sublimating your pleasures, rendering them more gustful and exquisite, and so will (if attended to) make good to you in earnest your mistaken pretence to* a life *of sensuality and delight.*

The particular Duties which are incumbent on Gentlemen, are such as shew that they have a Calling.

THE CONTENTS.

THE DEVOTIONS.

THE Gentleman's Calling.

SECT. I.

Of Buſineſs and Callings in general.

1. HE that by *ſloth* and improvidence diſſipates and conſumes that *Stock* which is properly his own, falls juſtly under the blunt cenſure of Folly, and uſually under the ſharper and more ſmarting penance of poverty and want: But he that is but a deputed manager, if he neglect his *depoſitum*, is liable to a heavier weight both of obloquy and diſcipline. The weakneſs of the one may poſſibly meet with ſomewhat of pity, but the falſeneſs and treachery of the other is the object of an univerſal deteſtation, and is oftentimes very ſeverely ſentenced by thoſe, who, if they would impartially reflect, would find themſelves deeply involved in the ſame guilt.

Folly to waſte our own ſtock; but treachery to make away that which is entruſted us by another.

2. God has placed *Man* in the World, not as a *proprietary*, but a *Steward*; he hath put many excellent things into his poſſeſſion, but theſe in truſt, to be not only kept, but negotiated with, and by traffick improved to the uſe of the true owner; yet herein dealing as a moſt bountiful Maſter, by not only promiſing tranſcendent rewards in the future to his fidelity, but even annexing at the preſent (as *to the heifer that treadeth out the corn*) a moſt liberal ſubſiſtence; interweaving his intereſt ſo with his duty, that the diſcharge of it is his only means of being happy even in this world.

Man is but a Steward of all that he poſſeſſeth in the World.

3. This certainly is the ſtate of mankind in general; every (*I mean rational*) perſon having ſomething of this kind intruſted to him. No man that hath underſtanding, be that of a higher or lower ſize, but hath variety of abilities of one ſort or other, and withal that actuating power, which ſhould ſet them on work. And then ſurely he that hath not been excluded from the receipts, muſt not pretend an exemption from the diſburſements, the taſks; but is under a ſtrict obligation of improving what he hath thus received, of bringing in fruit to the granary, as well in order to his own account and joy, in the auditing of the harveſt, as alſo to the glory of God, from whom alone he derives (and muſt impute) both the ſeed, and irrigation, and the very increaſe. And he that on theſe grounds, and according to theſe meaſures, decently adminiſters his province, ſedulouſly attends his duty in this matter, will find himſelf placed in ſuch an active ſtate of buſineſs, that he ſhall have little cauſe to ſuſpect himſelf neglected, or forgotten by God and nature, or placed in the world without a *Calling*.

Every man is intruſted with a Talent of one kind or other.

4. From what is thus indiſpenſably required of *all* men, no one rank or individual of that *ſpecies* can plead an immunity. And therefore till thoſe whom *birth*, *education* and *wealth*, and the common dialect of the world hath made known by the ſtile of *Gentlemen*, ſhall think fit to expunge the latter part of that title, and diſclaim the nature of *men*, as they are willing to do the duty, they muſt certainly retract this error, and acknowledge they have their ſhares in this common obligation.

5. Nay, indeed, if they could ſo far imitate the *Prince of the morning*, as to ſucceed to that rank which he was willing to leave, I mean, to aſcend above humanity, and aſſume the nature of Angels, yet even thither would this purſue and overtake them. Among all the orders of that divine Hierarchy, they would not find one patron or preſident of idleneſs. For as the ſpirituality of their eſſence renders them more agile and active, ſo that activity is perpetually exerciſed in imploying the divine abilities they have received, to the glory of God, the donor: And that not only in bearing a part in that celeſtial quire, which inceſſantly ſings his praiſes, but in the more laborious and ſervile offices of being miniſtring Spirits, yea, even to thoſe to whom both in reſpect of nature and innocence, they are infinitely ſuperior. And this they do with perfect alacrity

The bleſſed Angels in Heaven have their ſeveral offices and imployments as miniſtring Spirits.

alacrity and chearfulness, thinking it their greatest honour and dignity to be thus busied. Their *regitive power over the world*, saith *Gerson*, *is not so suitable an ingredient for a* Magnificat *of their composing, as that greater dignity of receiving and performing God's commands:* An evidence, how much the measures of honour differ between the courtiers of Heaven, and earth, the inhabitants of that refined, and this gross region. Thus then the prospect lies before the *Gentleman;* if he choose either to look level on the same nature with himself, or direct his eyes upward on that of the glorious Spirits that encompass God's throne, he will not in all the records of earth or Heaven find ever a *patent* for sloth, any clause of exemption in this universal law.

The brute beasts imploy their several powers and faculties to the end for which they were created.

6. Nay, if this *man in honour* would bid farewel to his birth-right, and become *like the beasts that perish*, Psal. 49. 20. if he could be content, in pursuit of this one fansied privilege of a *Gentleman*, to renounce all the real ones of a man, and make *Nebuchadnezzar*'s punishment his option; yet neither the field, nor the forest could give him sanctuary, afford him any number of associates to aid, or but countenance him in his mutiny against this divine decree; they would rather be his tutors and monitors to obey it. For what rank even of the most *savage* animals is there, which we can indict of the not imploying those faculties they have received? Are they not generally in a perpetual and regular motion to those ends for which they were created, in continual exercise of those powers with which they are endued? Yea, some of them with such improvement to all their necessary purposes, that it hath raised a doubt, whether they act by instinct, or reason, by fancy, or judgment. *Pythagoras* is discernably on their side; and *Aristotle*, that was less kind to them, seems by one saying to have yielded the cause, when of *those creatures which*, he saith, *want reason*, he confesseth, *that fancy supplies its place.* I need not take part in this dispute; whatsoever their faculties or talents are, none can doubt of their use of them; or whether this their uninterrupted obedience to the law of their creation reflects the proportionable glory on their Creator.

Yea, the very senseless and inanimate Creatures perform all the offices of their nature in an admirable and orderly manner.

7. To descend one degree lower yet; the very *inanimate* creatures afford their consort to this divine harmony, every one of them perform those offices, fail not in the exercise of all those (not unactive) qualities God hath put into them. The *sun* hath received a power of cherishing and enlivening terrestrial bodies; and it folds not up its rays, but communicates and dispenseth them freely. The *earth* has received a power of fructifying, giving sap and verdure to that which grows upon it, and it withholds not that vital moisture, but like a tender nurse, sends it forth liberally to all that expect nourishment from her breasts; and so proportionably to all other parts of this great body. And that all this serves to illustrate the glory of that omnipotent wisdom, which hath placed them in this so excellent a sub-ordination, is most visible without the help of a perspective. When the queen of *Sheba* saw the magnificence and regularity of *Solomon*'s court, she brake out into an admiration of his wisdom: And surely a far greater occasion is ministred to all those who contemplate the admirable order of the universe, with all transportation of soul to magnify and adore the divine disposer of it, as we see frequently exemplified to us in the sublime raptures of the holy *Psalmist*, who never better approves his right to be called *the sweet singer of Israel*, than on this ravishing theme.

No great honour for man to debase himself beneath the very lowest of the Creation.

8. And now, can it be fansied a privilege and dignity, to be the one *jarring string* in this great instrument? to discompose this divine melody, and become the only unprofitable useless part of the creation? Shall those whom God hath made *little lower than the Angels*, subdue and debase their natures beneath the very lowest rank of creatures? And shall this (not humble, but) sordid exinanition be look'd upon with reverence, courted as a preferment? This certainly is such an absurdity, as wants nothing to its confutation, but merely to be consider'd: And therefore if *Gentlemen* would but soberly reflect, there is little doubt but they would resign at once their claim, and their value of this so defaming a piece of honour; so abasing an exaltation.

The Devils themselves are never idle; but always busie and active toward man's destruction.

9. We can let down our thoughts but one step lower, and that is into the bottomless pit; and from thence sure none will desire to fetch a precedent, yet if he did, even that black region could not afford it. For though it must be confessed, those *accursed spirits* accord not with the former instances, in respect of the end of their actions, yet they do in the activity it self: Theirs is a busy state, though to an ill purpose: *Satan goes to and fro in the earth*, Job 2. 2. and he *walks about seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. 5. 12. Yea, he employs all his faculties too, makes diligent use of all that acuteness and dexterity, which either his nature or experience hath furnished him with, towards that end he pursues: So that it were a wronging, a calumniating even of the very *Devil*, to charge him with idleness; which though it be a

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ſin which yields him ſuch liberal crops, that he may well ſeek both to plant and cheriſh it in humane nature, yet he cannot offer ſuch violence to his own, as to become an example of it.

Idleneſs cannot find a patron throughout the whole universe.

10. We may hence make a meaſure, how ſcandalous, reproachful a thing this is, which neither *Heaven*, *Earth*, nor *Hell* it ſelf will own, but is like an illegitimate birth, diſclaim'd by all. How unreaſonable, nay, how infamous will it then be, for thoſe to take up this expoſed brat, to foſter this vice in their boſoms, who have, of all others, the greateſt and moſt particular obligation to deteſt it, as having received the moſt of thoſe talents which engaged them to action? And that ſuch is the *Gentleman's condition*, a ſlight inſpection will ſerve to demonſtrate.

SECT. II.

Of Varieties of Callings.

The more Talents we have receiv'd, the greater improvement is expected from us.

1. NOW ſince the univerſal obligation, which is incumbent upon all, and renders it ſtrict duty to have a *Calling*, reſts upon this undeniable ground, *That all men have received from God ſome abilities to actuate*, ſome *Talents* to improve; it follows by all laws of inference, that thoſe who have received the moſt of theſe, can, of all others the leaſt reaſonably pretend to an exemption, but muſt, on the contrary, be acknowledged under the conſtraint of the ſtronger and more numerous ties; the general duty which herein lies upon all, extending and ſpreading it ſelf into *ſeveral branches*, according to the quality and proportion of mens receipts.

God hath wiſely aſſign'd men to variety of Callings and Imployments.

2. Hence it comes to paſs, that mens *Callings* and Employments become ſo various, not only by the free choices of the ſeveral men, but even by the direction and aſſignation of God and nature; becauſe one man is furniſhed with an ability, which qualifies him for one ſort of Calling, another is by his diſtinct propriety mark'd out for another. And hence alſo it is, that thoſe Callings which are diſtinct in ſeveral perſons, may come to be united in one man; becauſe theſe ſeveral abilities, which conſtitute thoſe *Callings*, concurring in him, the duties muſt, by unavoidable conſequence, do ſo alſo. This is in ſome degree obſervable in moſt men, who, beſides the *general* powers common to mankind, do receive *ſome peculiar* in order to ſome ſpecial end, and ſo are obliged not only to thoſe exerciſes, which belong indifferently to their whole *ſpecies*, but to thoſe alſo for which they are individually qualified. Thus thoſe whom God hath called to *Chriſtianity*, are by that impowered for thoſe performances which that holy profeſſion exacts, and ſo have the Calling of *Chriſtians* ſuper-added to the other, which either natural or civil obligation had laid upon them; ſo that the ſame man may have various Callings, in relation to his differing capacities; unleſs, as we diſtinguiſh mens ſouls into the vegetative, the animal, and the rational, which, in ſtricter ſpeaking, may be ſaid to be only divers operations of the ſame ſoul; ſo in truth, what we term ſeveral Callings, be but the ſame comprehenſive one, ſtretching it ſelf into the ſeveral faculties of the perſon.

Gentlemen are ſo far from having no Calling, that they have obligations to many.

3. I need not attempt to evince the impropriety of the phraſe, 'twill ſerve my end as well that they paſs for ſeveral; and the application I ſhall make of it, is, to ſhew thoſe who are unwilling to hear of any *Calling* at all, that they have obligations indiſpenſable to more than one; they have whatever can belong to them as men; they have alſo what belongs to them as *Chriſtians*; and they have alſo a peculiar addition appertaining to them as *Gentlemen*, that is, by interpretation, thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed from the vulgar not only by empty names, and airy titles, but by real donatives, diſtributed to them by God, as ſo many diſtinct advantages, fertile and prolifical abilities, towards the bringing him in his expected harveſt of honour and glory.

The Duties that concern us as men and Chriſtians are generally forgotten and worn out of practice.

4. It is too much to be doubted, many of them may need admonition concerning the *two* former of theſe *Callings*; the duties even of men, much more of Chriſtians, being ſo far worn out of practice, that they ſeem to be out of memory too; for if they be at all reflected on, 'tis with the ſame ſcorn that the antiquated habits of our forefathers are, as things fit only to dreſs a man up an object of laughter and deriſion. But this would be too vaſt a theme, and beſides, is ſuperſeded by the many pious labours of others. My purpoſe therefore is not to treat at all of them, otherwiſe than they ſhall happen to be linked and interwoven, as in many particulars they are, with the third, that of the *Gentleman*.

There are several peculiar imployments that belong to Gentlemen as such.

5. And here they need not fear that I mean to put the ſpade or hammer into their hands, to require them to become either huſbandmen, or mechanicks: My whole deſign is founded in their diſtinction from theſe, namely, in thoſe things, wherein either in kind or degree they excel them. That many ſuch things there are, they will need no monitor at another time, when the queſtion is only of the reverence and reſpect due from ſuch their inferiors: In ſuch caſes every one can make large ſcrolls and catalogues (*written*, like *Ezekiel*'s roll, *within and without*) of his *advantages* and *prerogatives*, and ſtretch them to the exacting the very laſt mite of tribute they can poſſibly pretend to. But let them remember, that God is as jealous of his honour, as they can be of their own: And therefore, as they make thoſe preheminences inſtruments of attracting glory from thoſe below them, ſo they muſt alſo of reverberating and returning it home to that divine power above them, who beſtowed them to that end, and will not finally be deluded; but if they will diſappoint his primary intention, that of having his *grace* glorified in their faithful managery of thoſe talents, they ſhall not be able to defeat his ſecondary, that of having his *juſtice* magnified in the fatal doom of ſuch *ſlothful ſervants:* If they will envy him the more agreeable ſatisfaction of beſtowing rewards, they cannot defraud him of that (though inferior) of executing vengeance.

SECT. III.

The Particulars of the Gentleman's Advantages above others.

Advantages peculiar to Gentlemen are inſtanc'd in:

1. BUT to dwell no longer on generals, I ſhall deſcend to particularize thoſe *Advantages*, by which they are ſevered and diſcriminated from the vulgar, and which conſequently, by being peculiar to them, devolve on them an obligation of a *diſtinct duty*. And here I ſhall be careful to prevent diſpute, and therefore take in none but what are ſo obvious, as to be univerſally acknowledg'd, and then having my premiſſes granted, I ſhall hope they will not betray themſelves ſuch ill logicians, as to reſiſt or diſclaim the concluſion.

1. The Advantage of a liberal and ingenuous Education.

2. I begin with that *Advantage* which they are earlieſt poſſeſt of, that of an ingenuous and *refined Education*; of which, I hope, none that hath had it, will ſo far confute the efficacy, as to deſpiſe and undervalue it. What the Apoſtle urges in a higher argument, *Rom.* 9. may be appliable here. Mens minds are naturally of the ſame *clay*: *Education* is the *potter*'s hand and wheel, that forms them into *veſſels of honour* or *diſhonour*. And though experience ſhews us, it is too poſſible for men to deface thoſe nobler impreſſions which they have thus received, yet that makes it not ceaſe to be in it ſelf a moſt eſtimable bleſſing, any more than that excellency of God's image, wherein man was created, could be defaced by his fall. It is certain, there is no humane means more effectual towards the refining and ſharpning mens intellects, giving them an edge and quickneſs; and that the more, becauſe it takes them in that age, wherein their faculties are, as their joynts, pliant and tractable, and ſo capable of being by exerciſe improv'd into great degrees both of ſtrength and activity. This Advantage the meaner ſort generally want, the expenceſulneſs of ſuch a breeding ſets it beyond their reach: The indigence of whoſe condition doth, on the contrary, determine their purſuits to that only which may bring them in a ſubſiſtence, faſtens them to the ſhop, or plough, and ſo leaves their minds uncultivated, and unapt for thoſe more excellent productions, which the happier *inſtitution of Gentlemen* enables them for; as we ſee it obſerved by the Wiſe man, *Ecclus.* 38. 25. to the end of that Chapter.

2. The Advantage of Wealth and Riches.

3. A ſecond Advantage is that of *Wealth;* which to *Gentlemen* ſeems to be as it were rained down from the clouds, both in reſpect of the plenty, and the eaſineſs of its acquiſition. Fair patrimonies, large inheritances deſcend on them, without one drop of their ſweat, one minute's toil or ſolicitude, as if they were the undoubted heirs of the *Iſraelites* bleſſing, ſucceſſors in their *Canaan*, who were to *poſſeſs houſes full of all good things, which they filled not, and wells digged, which they digged not, vineyards and olive-trees, which they planted not*, as it is *Deut.* 6. 11. The poet hath placed it in the front of his inventory, the prime ingredient in the compleateſt felicity of this life, *Res non parta labore, ſed relicta:* Whereas, on the other ſide, the lower rank of men fetch their mere neceſſaries out of the earth; which being, as it

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were, hardned and petrified by *Adam*'s sin, must be mollified and suppled with their sweat, before it will become penetrable, will not yield them food, but gives them also a portion of sorrow with it. They must first be torn with those thorns and briars which cover her surface, before they can fetch nourishment out of her bowels; they must buy their bread with their sweat, as if they had engrossed the penalty of their first father's sin, whilst *Gentlemen* sweat only at the engagement of their *sports*, or by the direction of the *physician*, to digest their fulness of bread. Which every one must confess a sufficient inequality.

4. A third is that of *Time*; this depends by way of consequence on the former. For God having made such liberal provisions for them, thus prevented them with the blessings of his goodness, they can have no need to employ their Time to gain that, wherewith they already abound; and so being exempted from that one devouring expence of it, have a great stock to bestow on other more excellent purposes: Whereas the poor man hath scarce any vacant minute, or such as he can call his own. They are all forestalled by those pressing necessities which lie unremoveable upon him. His day-hours are challenged by his labour, his nights by his rest; and the satisfying of these claims so necessary, that his own support, perhaps that also of a numerous family, depends upon it; and therefore he may not attempt to defeat them. So that if *Time* be to be accounted a treasure, as undoubtedly it is, here is a second sort of poverty, to which he is exposed as a result of the former; and another manifest inequality between him and the *Gentleman*.

3. The Advantage of Time and Leisure.

5. A fourth, is that of *Authority*; by which I mean, not that which belongs to those which are advanced to publick office, for that being peculiar to some few only, will not bear a distinct part in my present consideration: But I understand by it, that more private influence which *Gentlemen* generally have on those that are their *dependents*. And this also may be reckon'd an effect of the former, their wealth: For in proportion to that, the number of servants, tenants, and pensioners (yea, perhaps of friends too) is to be measured. And over all these they have somewhat (though not of absolute despotical dominion, yet) of sway and prevalency. On the other side, the poor man's authority is bounded within the narrow circuit of his little cottage, being in effect no other than the propagation of that Power nature hath given him over his own body, to those branches which spring from it, his children; and to that cien which is ingrafted into it, his wife. And if he shall but peep out of this little principality, attempt to enlarge his territories, and prescribe to any foreigner, he will soon be taught how little his power is acknowledged, and consequently, how great a distance he stands in this particular also from the *Gentleman*.

4. The Advantage of Power and Authority.

6. The fifth is that of *Reputation* and *Esteem*; which, as the world goes, is a shadow that waits only on the greater bodies. Wealth and honour are the things that render any person considerable amongst men, prepare them with an aptness to embrace his dictates, to consider his counsels, to transcribe his copies. And though now it often falls out to be an unjust measure, yet perhaps it may have no unjust original. For if such persons did make use of those advantages they have, to make their minds as rich as their fortunes, this were but their due. And therefore if it be paid them upon this supposition, it is they only that are guilty of the injustice, by defeating the ground of it. But by what tenour soever they hold it, 'tis sure, it may be made an apt instrument to many good purposes, and therefore well deserves to be accounted into the number of their advantages. But now, if you look on the poor man, you shall see him loaded with contempts, from which no inward excellencies he possesses can rescue him. It is the observation of the Wisest of men, *That the poor man's wisdom is despised*, Eccles. 9. 16. So hated and scorned a thing is poverty, that, it seems, the fate of it is infectious, and casts reproach upon the most estimable things that cohabit with it. The world is so full of instances of this truth, that we need go no higher than our own times. But if we should look back, we may find one as ancient as *Job*, who in his own person experimented these distant effects of *prosperity* and *adversity*; while he was in a flourishing condition, *men gave ear to him, and waited, and kept silence at his counsel: After his words, they spake not again, and his speech dropped on them*, Job 29. 21, 22. But in the next chapter we find the scene quite changed, and this reverenced and adored person is become a *song and a bye-word to the basest of men*. I shall readily acknowledge this injurious treating of the poor to be a great barbarism: But though there can nothing be inferred from it as *de jure*; yet its being so *de facto*, proves all I am about to assert, *viz.* The great unevenness that is (in this instance, as well as the former) between *Gentlemen* and their inferiors.

5. The Advantage of Esteem and Reputation.

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All these Advantages are bestowed on Gentlemen to improve, and not to abuse or misimploy.

7. Having given this schedule of undeniable *privileges* they enjoy, I shall, before I proceed farther, beseech them here to make a stand, and soberly to consider, whether it be imaginable, that God hath put so many excellent instruments of action into their hands, only to make them less active? That were to accuse the divine wisdom of such an unskilful kind of managery, as the shallowest human providence falls not under. Will any of them be at the care and expence to furnish a *servant* with all materials and utensils for work, with no other design, but that he may spend his time either in sleep or riot? If they will not, I shall ask, how they would like a servant that should so absurdly pervert their intentions? And, according to the answer they give to that, leave them to conclude of their own acceptableness with their great Master; who not only in a single instance, but in an habitual course, behave themselves as preposterously. I cannot see how such a reflection, if made with any seriousness, can miss of being attended with a severe self-condemnation. And then that being so proper a *basis* and ground-work, should, methinks, by a kind even of natural energy, invite them to superstruct on it more noble and Christian purposes; that they who are so apt to expect adoration from others, so willing to be idoliz'd, may not yet any longer be willing to be indeed idols (*have mouths, and speak not*, &c. *Psal.* 135. as many unactive powers, as those have organs) but may rather aspire to some degree of resemblance to that divine essence, whose operations are as incessant as excellent, and by an unintermitted industry in employing those advantages God hath put into their hands, answer this design in bestowing them.

SECT. IV.

The Branches of his Calling founded in the first Advantage, that of Education.

That Gentlemen have a Calling, and what it is.

1. I Presume it is by this time rendred sufficiently evident, *that a Gentleman hath a Calling*: It is now seasonable to advance, and shew *what that is*. And of this the ground hath already been laid in the last *Section*, by the enumeration of those *peculiar Advantages* he possesses; which being those talents committed to his managery, *his Calling* will be the most exactly anatomized and distributed into its parts, by unfolding those several branches of his receipts, and examining what improvements each of them is capable of, which, as so many distinct limbs, make up the entire body of his *Calling*.

2. This I shall do, not only in the gross, but severally, through every one of them, and shall take the liberty of doing it with the addition of a double reflection, the one on the *contrary practice*, the other on *the pleasure* and satisfaction that will infallibly attend the discharge of *this duty*.

Education the first Advantage peculiar to Gentlemen,

3. I begin with that of their *Education*: the former part whereof commonly commences as timely as the first exercises of their reason. It is so creditable a thing to have children put into an early nurture, that there are few parents so careless of their own reputation, as to neglect it; but do either by themselves, or some others, to whom they assign the charge, put them under such a *discipline*, as may break their natural rudeness and stubbornness, mould them into some form of civility, and teach them that first fundamental lesson of obedience, on which all future instructions must be built. And this is an huge Advantage, not only towards the succeeding parts of Education, but toward the regularity of the whole life. For by having their infant passions thus check'd and bridled, they become more tame and governable ever after. The next part of Education is *erudition* and *instruction*, and under a *succession* of this they are for many years. Scarce any that owns the name of *Gentleman*, but will commit his son to the care of some tutor, either at home or abroad, who at first instils those rudiments proper to their tenderer years; and as age matures their parts, so advances his lectures, till he have let them in to those spacious fields of learning, which will afford them both exercise and delight. This is that *tree of Knowledge*, upon which there lies no interdict; which instructs not, as that in *Eden* did, by sad and costly experience, but by fair and safe intuitions, and may well be looked on as a principal plant in that *paradise*, wherein God hath placed this rank of men.

which qualifies them for many excellent purposes:

4. These two parts of Education united, qualify a man for many excellent purposes. It will be impossible to enumerate all; because a mind thus subdued and cultivated,

vated, must yet owe the opportunities of many actions to outward circumstances and occasions, which being various and accidental, can with no certainty be brought into the account. But abstracting from these, there are divers more intrinsick benefits, which nothing but a man's self can frustrate; and those alone I shall insist on.

5. First, a man thus educated is better prepared to resist all errors that may invade his *understanding*: His discerning faculty is more nimble and agile, can suddenly surround a proposition, and discover the infirm and feeble parts, and so is not to be imposed upon by such slight sophisms as captivate whole herds of the vulgar. This Advantage, it is apparent, he hath, and it is his *duty* to make use of it, to examine cautiously the grounds of an opinion, before he give up his assent to it, and not to betray his reason, either to his sloth, by neglecting to give it a competent discussion; or to his interest, by electing tenents rather by their profitableness than their truth. This certainly is the least that is supposable to be required of them in this particular; and sure, it is so moderate an injunction, as the most mutinous humour can have no temptation to quarrel at. For who could think him a severe imposer, who having furnished a man with a light, to direct him through some dark passage, should only require him not to blow it out?

The Understanding is thereby cultivated and improved;

6. And as he hath this Advantage in respect of his *understanding*, so hath he, in the second place, in relation to his *Will*: Which though it be a free faculty, and consequently cannot be forcibly determined to any thing, yet it is capable of perswasions and inducements, and is usually bended and inclined by them. It must therefore be a fair step towards the rectifying of the Will, when the intellect is stored with arguments and incentives to goodness. And this learning must be supposed to provide for, unless we will exclude out of the scheme both morality and divinity; for each of those will yield variety of such arguments. *Morality* will present virtue as perfectly amiable in it self, and so fit it to be embraced for its own sake: And not only so, but also as highly profitable and advantageous to us, as being that which gives the sublimest perfection to our natures, the sweetest rest and tranquillity to our minds, and, in a word, a full satisfaction to all our rational appetites. *Divinity* confirms all this, and superadds what infinitely transcends it, the assurance of those eternal and glorious rewards in another world. And these surely are such tempting *allectives*, as are very proper to attract the Will, to choose what appears thus excellent, thus desirable, provided they be justly represented to it. And the doing that, the pressing these motives home upon the *Will*, and that in refutation of all the contrary deceivable pretensions of vice, is the first part of their obligation. But then there is also a second, and that is, that they permit themselves to be persuaded by such efficacious arguments, and actually conform their Wills to these dictates of their understanding; that is, that they really and effectively be such men, as their Education directs and requires them to be: Which being the work of their *Wills*, 'twill be absurd to plead impossibility, or infirmity, since 'tis manifest they may if they will; which is such a degree of liberty, as serves in all other instances to denominate a man a free agent, and such as all punishments and rewards, both divine and humane, are founded on.

which conduceth much to the well inclining and disposing of the Will,

7. A third Advantage is in relation to his *Affections*; which being the inferior, and more brutish part of the man, are yet so impetuous and assuming, that they are very apt to usurp the dominion over the nobler faculties; and where they gain it, the event is answerable to what we see in states, where the common people have wrested the sceptre, all is put into confusion. Now that which may prevent these civil broils in the soul, and secure the government to the proper sovereign, may well be reputed an Advantage. And to this nothing merely humane is more conducing than *Education*. For, first, that early discipline which we presumed, one part of it puts a bridle in the mouths of these head-strong passions, which, by many repeated acts of restraint, at last forget their native ferity, and become more calm and tractable. But then erudition compleats this conquest, backs this unruly beast, and, by a dexterous managery, not only restrains, but guides him, and makes him serve to many useful purposes; renders these mutinous rebels not only captivated slaves, but good subjects, obedient to the laws of Reason. All this Education is of it self aptly disposed to do, if men will not take the beast's part against it, encourage him to plunge, till he have thrown the rider. And all that is in this particular required of them, is but to hold fast those reins that are thus put into their hands, to keep their Affections in such a just subjection, that they may receive, not give laws. Thus we see the influence which *Education* hath on all the essential parts of a man's mind. And were it here so immured and closed up, that it could make no sallies at all thence, did the soul, like *Gideon's fleece*, ingross *all this precious dew*; yet whilst that receiv'd such liberal

and to the right ordering and governing of the Affections:

liberal infusions, it would irrefragably evince this to be no mean, inconsiderable Advantage. But it is, indeed, impossible it should be so confin'd; for if it be permitted to make these impressions within, as heat in the centre fails not to diffuse it self to the circumference, so certainly will it extend and manifest it self in the more visible effects; all the products and emanations of a mind thus regulated, will own their original, bear the image of their parent.

The benefits whereof appear, 1. In the affability and obligingness of their Behaviour;

8. And first, his *Behaviour* will be affable and civil, not insolent and imperious; as one that knows humanity and gentleness is a common debt to mankind, and therefore will not think fit to contract or dam up his civility into so narrow a compass, that it shall swell into complement, and mean flattery towards those above, and not suffer one drop to descend on those beneath him; but disperse its streams so, that all channels may be filled with it. 'Tis true, the depth of some will require a greater proportion to that filling than others, and there 'tis not to be doubted, but he may be more liberal; only in the mean time the shallower are not to remain dry. Let the inequality be such as proceeds only from the capacities of the subjects, not from the partiality of the agent, and he prevaricates no part of his duty in this matter.

2. In the civility of their Speech and Language;

9. Secondly, His *words* will be temperate and decent; the product of judgment, not of rage. For he that hath calmed his passions, hath nothing to betray him to rash, angry, or rude Language: This is a foam which is cast up only by the billows of a turbulent, tempestuous mind; and can never be the issues of a serene, composed temper. To this it is but proportionable, that they be also weighty and material. *A wise man's words*, saith the son of *Sirach*, *are weighed in the balance*; and therefore he that hath improved his *Education* to that pitch of proficiency, will surely look his discourse be such as may answer that character, which must at the least suppose it to have something of solidity, no man ever attempting to put froth and bubbles into the scales. And not only so, but it must also presume it to have something of use and value; for, whoever takes pains to weigh what for its uselesness and meanness he intends to cast out as refuse? And both these qualifications are very essential parts of a *Gentleman's* dialect, the one opposed to light and foolish, the other to unseasonable discourse. For as the one hath nothing of weight (unless it be that of a burden to the hearers) so the other can have nothing of use, nor consequently of worth, that being to be measured by the aptness of it to the persons to whom it is addressed. It should be the endeavour of those whom God hath endued with knowledge, to convey as much of benefit and instruction to others as they can: In order whereunto, 'tis necessary they adapt their speech to the capacities of those they treat with, otherwise let them discourse never so elaborately, they will rather confound, than edifie, and appear to affect more to boast, than communicate their knowledge.

3. In the choice of worthy and suitable Employments:

10. Lastly, His *Employments* will be worthy and ingenuous. A man that hath this *inward* nobility of mind superadded to that of his birth, will abhor to busie himself viciously, or impertinently; he hath those qualifications which render him useful, and he must give himself those exercises, whereby he may become the most eminently so. If by just authority he be assigned to any publick charge, he is to embrace it chearfully; not as a prize either to ambition, or covetousness, but as an opportunity of virtue; a sphere wherein he may move the most vigorously in the service of God, and his country. But this happening but to few, it is necessary he have some other reserve of action. And such surely, he that industriously designs it, cannot want: Wherein, though perhaps his influence will not be so general as in that, yet it may fall very auspiciously on many. And when all those occasions are exhausted too, when all direct operations are at a stand, he may yet betake him to the reflex'd, employ his activity upon himself, which will always remain a proper object of his industry; he being, though a rich, yet still such an improvable soil, as will encourage and reward his husbandry, though never so often repeated. And now I shall presume it apparent, that *Education* is a most estimable treasure, a precious *mine*, that contains so many rich veins. Oh, why should any that possess it, suffer themselves to be poor, merely for want of diligence in digging out the *ore?*

But Gentlemen now do commonly defeat all these good ends of their Education:

11. And would to God that were an impertinent complaint, such as none were concerned in. But they that look on the manners of many that have had this happy institution, will find too great cause to wonder and bewail, that so hopeful a seeds-time should produce so slender, nay, so degenerate a crop: As if *Job's* curse were here exemplified, *Job* 31. 40. *Thistles to grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley.* * *Plutarch* tells us of a *voice frozen in the midst of a river*, that became *audible by the thaw*, and applies it to moral precepts taught in youth, but actuated by age. The Simile speaks him to have lived in better times: For in these the voice dissolves with the

the ice, leaves not so much as an eccho behind it. Men now make it the business of their riper years, to unravel not the follies, but the learning of their youth: No sooner are they got from under the discipline of others, but the first act of it they exercise, is upon those notions which have been instilled into them. And here they are such severe *lictors*, that the mildest infliction is to gag and bind them, deprive them both of voice and motion. Nor are they ordinarily satisfied with this, but as if they feared they would, like impatient captives, watch some advantage to break loose again, their final doom is *ostracism*, they and their lineage; all sober counsels derived from them are utterly expuls'd, so totally rased out of their minds, that not the least footsteps of them remain. And all this under the name of *pedantry*; a title, which, it is probable, their great averseness to their teachers suggests to them, as the most pathetick reproach; as if they meant now to be revenged on learning and tutor together, for attempting to make them wise against their wills.

12. And now when the root is thus stockt up, there is little expectation of fruit. And therefore, he that shall here look for those fore-mentioned effects of *Education*, will be more disappointed, than *Christ* seemed *to be by the fig-tree*; that though *fruitless*, yet afforded *leaves*. But here we are not to hope for so much, no sign that ever there was such a plant in the soil. Let us briefly review those severals, and see what of them is ordinarily to be met with.

For, first, They neglect the Improvement of their Understanding, except it be in the principles of Sin and Vanity,

13. And first, for the resisting of *errors*, we usually find *Gentlemen* no *heroes* in this point: Their *Understandings* are as pliant, as seducible as those who never had their means of fortifying them. And if they do indeed reject errors, it is commonly by the same engine wherewith they cast off truth, *viz.* their inconsideration of both, as not being able to endure so much seriousness and intention of mind, as may serve to *enter* them of any opinion. They have transplanted their discerning faculty from their intellect to their *senses*, and find it there so full, so incessant employment, that it can never be at leisure to revert to scholastick disquisitions. They can discern exactly the most minute error in their garment, hold their artificer most rigidly to the laws of the *mode*, are most exquisite judges in all that relates to vanity or pleasure; and can they ever think fit to trouble their heads (whose least *lock* must not for a world be disturbed) with abstruser speculations, who have found out so much a more easie exercise of their faculties? If any shall think this character partakes of the satyr, I shall beseech him to compare it with the true state of our young *gallants* in this point; and then upon the same account that cold and scanty praises go for detraction, I shall expect this very imperfect and partial accusation may pass for a panegyrick.

whereby their Wills are corrupted into a dislike of Virtue, and love of Vice;

14. Next for the regulation of their *Wills*, that Advantage depends so much on the former, that of their *understandings*, that what evacuates that, must necessarily be supposed to do the same for this also. It is not imaginable, that he who hath defaced all his principles, whether moral or divine, or at least, never revolves or considers them, should receive any influence from them, since they operate not but by a distinct application. And here should I ask many *Gentlemen*, when they ever so much as attempted any thing of this sort, I fear they would be forced to quarrel at the incivility of the question, to evade the necessity of answering it. But God knows, their actions speak too loud, that their business is to obey, not to prescribe; to fulfil, not regulate their *Wills*. Nay, indeed, 'tis too frequent, that instead of conforming their Wills to their principles, they model and transform their principles to their Wills; herein verifying *Aristotle*'s observation, *That pleasures are corruptive of principles.* And so by this one art of inversion the face of things is quite changed; virtue, which their books represented to them as lovely and honourable, is now thought to have gained that lustre only by the flattery and varnish of the painters, and so is decried, as the most unamiable, despicable creature: And, on the other side, all the contrary vices are taken from under that black veil philosophers or divines have put upon them; and are furbish'd and trimm'd up, set to open view, as the most splendid, glorious things, the most adorning accomplishments of a *Gentleman*.

and to such a degree as to question either the Holiness or Being of God.

15. And to secure this transmutation, even God himself must have his part in it, be concluded to have been all this while mis-represented in those characters of *purity* and *justice* his Word has made of him, and to have laid no such severe restraints upon men, as that tells us of. That *temperance*, *chastity*, *self-denial*, *mortification*, &c. were but the creations of some melancholy *recluses*, who would then enviously impose those bands upon others, wherewith they had foolishly fetter'd themselves; that God is more indulgent to mens appetites, which they may satiate here as they please, without those future dangers preachers fright them with; that this is the new *gentile divinity*, we need not appeal to mens lives, their words openly proclaiming it,

not without much ſcorn and contempt of their eaſie ſimplicity, who govern themſelves by the other. Yet as if this would not ſufficiently provide for impiety, as if they were conſcious of that abſurdity, which indeed there is in defining God an abettor and favourer of vice, many have advanced a ſtep higher, taking a more compendious courſe; and ſince they cannot bring God over to their party, make him ſuch as will ſerve their turn, will unmake him, by becoming flat Atheiſts. Of this there are too too many inſtances, and 'tis to be feared will be many more; whilſt to all other ſenſual allurements that opinion makes to its proſelytes, this is added, that it is become a *creditable* thing, the badge and ſignature of a modern *wit*, thus to be one of *David's* fools, in ſaying, *There is no God.*

Their affections hereupon become brutiſh, irregular, and diſorderly;

16. In the next place, let us deſcend to the *affections*, and ſee what effect of their Education is diſcernable there. And truly that ſeems to be no other, than what is obſervable of a dam, but to intercept the courſe of ſome rapid ſtream, which ſo ſoon as it is either removed, or born down, the torrent guſhes with ſo much the greater violence, for having had that oppoſition: So here, when the reſtraints, which bridled their minority, are taken off, their paſſions ſwell to a higher degree of impetuoſity; they ceaſe to be boys and men together, the man is diſmounted, looſes the reins, and is dragg'd whither the fury of the beaſts directs. A ſad change, yet daily too viſible in many! For alas! what is more ordinary, than to ſee *Gentlemen* under the dominion of theſe bruitiſh appetites? ſometimes tranſported by a *rage* to the greateſt undecencies, nay, dangers; ſometimes hurried by a *luſt*, like the *poſſeſt perſon*, Mark 9. 22. through *fire and water*, the moſt deſperate deſtructive attempts, and have nothing but rottenneſs and diſeaſe, as the final prize of all thoſe difficult adventures; ſometimes drowned in ſwiniſh *intemperance;* and ſometimes again intombed in the *earth*, buried as it were alive by ſordid covetouſneſs, as if they meant to tranſcribe, though not the innocence, yet the *ſufferings* of the *primitive* Chriſtians, in being torn in pieces by *wild beaſts.* Oh! that they might once be brought to relinquiſh this abſurd fortitude, that thoſe who laugh at the precept *of turning the other cheek*, Matth. 5. 39. would not here infinitely over-act it, and give up themſelves to be buffeted, yea, ſlaughter'd by theſe their cruelleſt enemies; nor be ſuch *platonick* lovers of martyrdom, as to chuſe only this, whereto there is no crown annexed, but what is worn in the kingdom of darkneſs.

their behaviour proud and imperious towards their Inferiours, flattering and diſſembling towards their Betters;

17. And now ſince we are thus to ſeek of theſe *inward* effects, we can with no reaſon hope for any of thoſe *outward*, which are the reſults and conſequences of theſe. And then 'twill be no wonder to obſerve *Gentlemen* behave themſelves diſdainfully and imperiouſly, as if they could not ſet a juſt value on themſelves, without the unjuſt contempt of others. 'Tis true, indeed, this is commonly a wind that blows but one way, down the hill, only upon thoſe below them; upwards they breathe gentler gales; it being one of their moſt ſtudied faculties, to perform all acts of the moſt ſuper-errogating civility to thoſe above them. But when that civility is throughly ſcann'd, it will prove a greater injury than the contrary rudeneſs; 'tis made up of ſuch hollow profeſſions, ſuch groſs flatteries, as are much worſe than reproaches, nay, ſeldom fail to be actually ſeconded with them; there being nothing more uſual, than to revile and deride thoſe at a diſtance, whom, when preſent, they admire and adore. And theſe now become ſuch eſſential, indiſpenſible parts of good breeding, that the want of either inevitably betrays a man to the title of a ſilly ruſtick; flatteries and deſpiſings being the two contrary elements, whereof he, whom they call a *fine Gentleman*, is to be compounded.

their diſcourſe vain, frothy and trifling:

18. This gives an account alſo of ſome part of his *dialect*, which thus far anſwers little to thoſe requiſite qualifications, weight and uſefulneſs; there being nothing more trivial or uſeleſs, than theſe two parts of converſation; and 'twere well if no worſe epithets belonged to them. But if we look alſo into the reſt, they will ordinarily appear to carry proportion with theſe: 'Tis every man's obſervation, that *no ſpring will riſe higher than its firſt head;* and then words being but the iſſues of the mind, where that wants the ballaſt of ſober and virtuous notions, 'tis no wonder if the diſcourſe be light and airy. 'Twere eaſie to exemplify in the ſeveral ſorts of it adapted to the ſeveral humours of men; but 'tis alſo ſo needleſs, that the copy would be too exact, by tranſcribing the impertinence too. But what ſuch frothy diſcourſe is naturally, the moſt ſerious may become by accident: And thus we ſee it the infirmity of ſome, who ſo far retain their *Education*, as to have their minds better repleniſhed, to vent their plenty ſo unſeaſonably or affectedly, that it produces nothing of benefit to the hearers, but rebounds injuriouſly with the aſperſion of vanity upon themſelves.

19. But

19. But such is the misery of this age, that it were a fair composition, if *Gentlemen* could be persuaded to reduce their *discourse* only to a privative sort of illness; it were somewhat tolerable, if, as on the one side, they did not *minister grace*, Eph. 4. 29. so on the other, they did not breathe infection on the hearers. But alas! what are all those profane scoffings at piety so frequent among them, but as so many blasts and malevolent vapours, to nip and destroy the practice of it? And so we see it too commonly does among those whose greener reflections set them not above their malignant influence. How does their immodest and obscene talk disperse and scatter their own impure fires, to the inflaming of others? And whilst they inscribe upon these poisons the inviting names of ingenuity and *esprit*, they do not only tempt men greedily to imbibe them, but even defame and prostitute that wit they pretend to; render it a *wilderness* for all savage rudeness to range in, and make as many *candidates* for that reputation, as there are impious and beastial men in the world. And to this sort of *wit* they have found out a very proportionable rhetorick, I mean that of their *oaths*, that hellish piece of oratory, which so overspreads their language, that (like a profuse embroidery, that even quite hides the stuff) it becomes the most remarkable part of it. 'Tis not a little strange, how this foulest deformity hath gotten to pass for an embellishment and ornament of style; but that it doth so, is very visible, not only from the no pretence of other temptation to it, but also from that affected and studied variety observable among them, as if they had the same concernment for their discourse which they have for themselves, *viz.* that it may every year appear in some new piece of dress, have some oaths fresh minted to set it off.

Yea, many times scurrilous, filthy and profane;

20. To all these we may add their vain *boastings* and *assumings*, which are often so deplorably ridiculous, that 'tis doubtful whether more *pity* or *contempt* belongs to them. Thus oftentimes he that has but cross'd the seas to fetch a feather and *fantastick mien*, brags more of his travels, than if he had pass'd the *line*, and felt the scorchings of the torrid zone. And upon the strength of this he takes authority to impose on others the most absurd and incredible relations; yet still imposing more perniciously on himself, *i. e.* a belief that he appears very illustrious and glorious in all this; and on that confidence, the smiles which his auditors mean in scorn, shall be taken in applause of him, and so encourage those follies they deride.

and attended with ridiculous boasting and ostentation;

21. Indeed, where this vain humour dwells, it will betray itself in innumerable indecencies of speech; but never does it give itself a fuller or worse character, than when it lets loose to anger and rage, one of the most genuine and fruitful branches of this bitter root. And this we frequently see overflow in all the invenomed, reproachful language imaginable, such as one would wonder should fall from the mouth of any, whose Education had not been wholly barbarous; an inverted kind of eloquence, whereto some, who have been taught the rules of better rhetorick, have a great fluency.

which oft-times breaks forth into rage and reproachful language.

22. If now we should proceed to take a view of their *employments*, there is little doubt but that *Tekel*, Dan. 5. 27. might be a proper inscription on them, yea, a mild one too, lightness and vanity being many times the most innocent ingredient in them. And this is but a natural inference from the former; for since the principle of actions as well as words is within, it will certainly operate alike in both; as water sent from one fountain through several pipes, is the same, and hath equal vertues or faults in each. It were too easie to give as particular an account of these as the former; but foreseeing an occasion to do that in another place, I shall transfer it thither, as not desiring to iterate the importunity on so ungrateful a subject.

23. And now, he that shall consider, that all this is but the partial image and representation of those, who have had that Education we so much magnified, will sure be tempted to ask *Judas*'s question, *Ad quid perditio hæc? Why was all this waste* of discipline and literature? To what purpose was so costly a foundation laid, when the superstructure is, in the Apostle's phrase, 1 *Cor.* 3. 12. nothing *but hay and stubble?* And I doubt, many defeated Parents have cause to make this complaint: But I fear also divers of them may, with justice, accuse themselves as accessaries to their own disappointments, who by an overhasty desire of seeing their sons men, do at once anticipate and frustrate their hopes, evacuate the benefit of many years Education, by taking them too soon from under its benign influence. Which though it usually spring from immoderate indulgence, is yet really the greatest severity; for, what can be more so, than to tie them to all the labour and toil of the seeds-time, force their childhood to that study and intention, of which that giddy age is most impatient, and then snatch them away at the *harvest*; suffer them to converse no more with learning, when once they grow capable of receiving either delight

Education and Learning is oft-times ill bestowed upon Gentlemen, and this through their Parents fault as well as their own.

light or profit by it? Thus, of late, it hath been the method of breeding, to post them with an inconvenient speed from one stage to another, many times bringing them too soon to the university, but much oftner taking them too early from it, before they have near gained what they came thither to furnish themselves with: And from thence, the next step is over the *sea*, which soon washes away those notions which lie crude in their brains, but have wanted maturity of years to digest into their manners. Indeed, 'tis not imaginable how they should retain them; they being, at their coming abroad, solemnly put in a direct course of forgetting speedily what they formerly learnt, their whole time being then by order to be taken up in other unspeculative exercises, wherein if they do happen to attain to some eminency, yet 'tis sure but a dry exchange for what they quit for it. But then 'tis not one in twenty that arrives to that: The negligence of governours, or their own headiness, when they find the rein thus slackned, often makes their progress little in any thing they are appointed to; but instead of that, they run a full career in all debauch'd pleasures, advance there in an instant to the highest proficiency. I say not this, to decry *travelling* in general, but only the unseasonable time that is chosen for it. He that would really improve his son by that means, should send him at such a mature age, when, by the help of his foregoing Education, his judgment is settled and qualified to make useful observations, his manners well weighed and fixed, that so he may be capable of all the good foreign climes can afford, and secured from the infection of the ill; like a load-stone attract things of weight only, and not like jet draw nothing but chaff and straws. But I confess this a digression, and therefore return to those who have thus imbezelled this precious Advantage (and who have too much of their own wills in it, to be able to transfer the guilt upon any error of their Parents) beseeching them seriously to lay to heart this their so ruinous ill husbandry, and to let at last some better fruits of that seed appear; not to suffer a piece of *plate* left to the school or college to be the only testimonials that ever they were there, and so bring those societies under the reproach of extortion or fraud, of professing learning, but imparting none, of having taken something from them without giving them any valuable consideration, making them any proportionable returns. But that they would at last take up this talent thus long buried in the napkin, and yet fall a trading with it. And though the time they have lost should render them desperate of the reward of the *ten cities*, 'tis yet motive enough to industry, to rescue themselves from the sentence of the *slothful servant*. And yet that will not be all; for there being no middle state between reward and punishment, he that delivers himself from the one, puts himself likewise into a certain capacity of the other. But besides all he is to expect hereafter, he is sure, at the time of a very fair antepast of pleasure here, which he will immediately reap from it, as the first fruits of the future rich harvest, which though the law commanded to be sacrificed, yet such is the indulgence of the Gospel, that it exacts nothing, but that men would themselves enjoy them.

Virtue and Piety conduce to our Temporal as well as Eternal welfare and advantage.

24. For such is the admirable goodness of God, that he is generally pleased to adapt his commands, not only to our Eternal, but Temporal concernments; for knowing the impatience of our nature, that we love not to depend wholly upon reversions, he hath been pleased to put somewhat of present gust and relish upon every part of duty. This might be evidenced distinctly through the whole *codex* of Christian precepts, his *yoke is an easie*, nay, *gracious yoke; his burden a light burden*, Matth. 11. 28. And from this general ground, I may have warrant sufficient to affirm the like of this particular I am now upon. But it may be yet more clearly evinced, by reflecting on the several improvements of this talent, which have been mention'd, as the *duty* of all those that possess it.

The great advantage of wisdom, or of a good understanding well cultivated and improved.

25. And first, for that of an acute and *elevated understanding*, I need appeal no further than to common vote, to have that pronounced a very desirable thing, it being hard to pick out a man of such an avowed brutality, that will own the despising it; even those who will be at no pains to acquire, will yet profess to esteem it. And we may believe them in earnest, if from no other argument, yet from this, that every man affects the reputation of being wise; is pleased when he succeeds in that aim; and on the contrary, is not more troubled and discomfited at any thing, than to be taxed of ignorance or error. If any shall deny this, I shall suspend his confutation, 'till somebody reproach him with folly; and then, from the displeasure he finds in himself, leave him to conclude his own value of wisdom. And indeed, why do good men look upon a *fool* with so much pity, and ill men with so much scorn, if knowledge be not both a felicity and a credit? Nor is this the sentence only of the vulgar, who usually admire those things most, from which they stand at the greatest distance, but especially

ſpecially of the more diſcerning ſort of men, who from every taſte they have had of it, have had their appetites ſo raiſed, that they have inſatiably thirſted after the fuller draughts. This made ſo many of the old *philoſophers* renounce the enjoyment of thoſe ſenſual pleaſures that offered themſelves, to go in queſt after this one tranſcendent delight; and *Solomon* to prefer this, in his election, before riches and honour, the two principal parts of worldly ſplendor, to the rectitude of which choice God himſelf bears teſtimony. And now if this be in itſelf ſo valuable, ſo raviſhing a thing, ſhall its being here connected with duty prove ſuch an allay, as to deprive it of all the guſt? Certainly if it do, it muſt argue the palate very perverſe and diſtemper'd; for to all other, that one conſideration would give a reliſh and flavour to the drieſt, the moſt unpleaſant undertaking. The conſcience that I am now employed as I ought, is ſuch a refreſhment, as is able to ſweeten the ſevereſt labour, yea, the greateſt ſuffering. Shame is a thing to which humane nature hath an innate abhorrence, yet the Apoſtles made it *matter of joy, when it befel them for Chriſt's ſake*, Acts 5. 41. And ſhall this bleſſed copy of theirs be transformed, inſtead of tranſcrib'd? Shall thoſe who have not ſo much *Chriſtian patience*, as to bear the ſlighteſt reproach for him, have yet ſo much *unchriſtian ſtupidity*, as to endure the greateſt in oppoſition to him? chooſe rather to be ignorant, when 'tis both their ſin and ſhame; than wiſe, when 'tis their duty and reward? invert St. *Paul's* choice, and be fools againſt Chriſt, as he owns to be *for him?* If there be any ſuch *antipodes* in our clime, their unhappineſs will yet ſerve to illuſtrate what they refuſe to partake of, *viz.* the felicity of having perform'd this part of duty in the improvement of the underſtanding.

The great happineſs of a rectify'd and well-diſpoſed Will.

26. In the next place, The *regularity* of the *Will* is extremely both amiable and profitable. For that being an uncontroulable faculty, if it be wrong ſet, what torrents of miſchief and confuſion does it let in? If in all its conceptions it permit the ſenſual appetite to lay, like *Jacob*, its *pilled rods before it*, all its births will be *ring-ſtreaked, ſpeckled, and ſpotted.* The ruinouſneſs of a perverſe Will is ſo generally underſtood, that there is nothing renders a man, even in common account, more miſerable and deplored. He whoſe Will runs counter to his reaſon, every man is *aſtrologer* enough to read his *deſtiny*, and preſage his deſtruction. And by the undecent and pernicious effects of a diſordered, we may make an eſtimate of the beauty and advantage of a rectified Will. The former, like a vicious, improvident governor, expoſes his territories to a deluge, firſt of luxury, and then of ruin: But this latter, like a virtuous and prudent prince, at once ſecures the innocence and felicity of his ſubjects. Indeed, it is this alone that really and effectively gives us the preheminence above beaſts. They have *choices* as well as we, and they have affections; but wanting the higher principle of *Reaſon*, their choices are neceſſarily determined by their affections. Now if we who have both, are guided only by the latter, wherein does our ſtate differ from theirs, ſave only that our liberty makes us guilty, whereas their neceſſity leaves them innocent? I preſume I need ſay no more, to evince the happineſs of a well-order'd Will; ſince none can conteſt it, but he muſt tacitly confeſs himſelf weary of his humane nature, and emulous, not of a greater dignity, but of a degradation to that of the brutes.

The great pleaſure of having our Affections under good government and reſtraint:

27. And as much may be ſaid concerning the *Affections*, which, if they be not curbed and held in by the underſtanding, will have as free and uncontrouled a ſway in men, as they have in mere animals, but with worſe effects, by how much we have more objects to incite them, more inſtruments to actuate them, than theſe have. If any man can be tempted to think this no unpleaſant condition, let him yet farther conſider, that this metamorphoſis is not like the fanſied tranſmigration of the ſoul, wherein it was ſuppoſed to aſſume the nature, and conſequently the paſſions but of one beaſt alone: No, here is the whole wilderneſs let looſe upon a man, with all their contrary appetites, perpetually combating one with another. He that hath the rapaciouſneſs of a *wolf*, may yet have the timorouſneſs of an *hare*; and ſo is racked between the deſire of having, and the fear of ſuffering. He that hath the luſt of a *goat*, may yet have the intemperance of a *ſwine*, and be diſtracted to which of the appetites to give himſelf. He that hath the cruelty of a *tyger*, may yet have the wilineſs of the *fox*, which will give him the pain of many irkſome delays, in attending an advantageous opportunity. And ſo proportionably in others. And what can be more unſupportably uneaſie, than to have theſe continual tumults within, to be in a ſtate of hoſtility, not only with other men, but with himſelf? Or what can there need, beyond this conſideration, to recommend the contrary condition to us? The ſubduing theſe brutiſh inclinations, is the introducing peace into a land haraſs'd and waſted with inteſtine war: And ſure, none need be told (at leaſt in this age) that that is a moſt raviſhing pleaſure. And

I may with the same confidence appeal to the verdict of any who hath tried these two contrary states, and doubt not, but he will from his experience confirm the most profuse and even poetick declamation that can be made on this theme.

All which Advantages make up the greatest part of Happiness in Heaven.

28. All I shall add, is, in a joint relation to this and the two former, by observing, that illuminated understandings, regulated wills and affections, make up a great part of the *celestial Happiness*. The *Angels* of *light* would no longer have right to that title, without these. The *spirits of just men made perfect* were improperly so styled, *Heb.* 12. 23. had they not received this accomplishment of their nature. And the greater degrees hereof we arrive to here, so much the more sensible anticipation have we of those divine joys. And sure, thus to partake with Angels and Saints, is to be happy, and will be acknowledg'd so by all, whose value and wishes of a *Mahometan paradise*, render them not uncompetent to estimate these purer and refined pleasures.

The great Advantage of a courteous, friendly and gentle Behaviour.

29. If from hence we proceed to those *outward effects*, which are the results of these *inward*, we shall find they are all full of delight and satisfaction. Courtesie and friendship of *Behaviour* does not only cast a glorious lustre round about, attract the eyes and hearts of others, but it also reflects with chearful and comfortable gleams upon our selves. For *man* being designed by God for a sociable creature, hath such propensions and inclinations put into him, as are proper to that end; and these are gratified and pleased, when we so demean our selves, as may answer that intention, towards which nothing can be more necessary, than this debonair and gentle carriage; for that allures people to our conversation, whereas the contrary roughness frights and deters them (the churlishness of a *Nabal* makes men they *cannot speak to him*, 1 Sam. 25. 17.) it gives a man part of *Nebuchadnezzar*'s fate, separates him from among men, by forcing them to withdraw from him, and that the worst part of it too; the *hairs like eagles feathers, and the nails like birds claws*, being much the lighter degree of the infliction, fit to pass for dress and ornament, compared with that more deforming disguise this rugged temper puts upon a man. And as on the one side, this morosity and sourness of humour is very uneasie; so, on the other, is that form of fawning and flattering compliance, which some call civility: It obliges men, in many circumstances, to renounce their ease, their health, yea, their understandings too, and keeps them in such constraint, that one may truly say, a less measure of self-denial would serve to constitute a man a good Christian, than an exact courtier; whereas he that keeps himself in a just mean, neither drives away one sort of company, nor buys the other so dear; he has a standard-measure by which to dispense his civilities, *viz.* the quality and worth of the persons; and confounds not himself with those more unjust and mutable rules of their expectations. So in the first of the instances he keeps himself a man, whilst the other is in some respect a beast; in the second, he preserves himself a freeman, whilst the other is a slave: And sure, I may refer it to any man's decision, which is the pleasanter state.

The Advantage of prudent, sober and profitable Discourse.

30. Next, for the *words*: 'Tis not to be doubted, but that calm and temperate language has the advantage of that which is passionate and rageful; and that not only in respect of decency, but ease too, of which there needs no other testimony, than that visible perturbation and uneasiness observable in all who are under such a transportation. So, in like manner, when the words are pertinent and weighty, they give not only more satisfaction to the hearer, but to the speaker also: This may be judged by the contrary displicency men have at themselves, when they are conscious to have spoken impertinently or undecently. By *satisfaction*, I mean not that vanity, which men too often affect, of shewing their parts, but a just and sober complacency, arising from the conscience of having regulated their discourse by the measures of a wise man and a Christian, the having said that which may be of benefit, but cannot be of mischief to his auditors. And this, surely, is a much more real pleasure, than any can be had in the contrary kind of dialect. If to this it be objected, That generally, none are so much delighted with their own discourses, as they who talk the most vainly and absurdly: I answer, That even these are not pleased with the vanity and absurdity; their pleasure results from a mistake, supposing it to be the quite contrary. And this helps to evince, that solid and prudent speaking gives satisfaction, since even the shadow and fiction of it can be made to yield to it.

The great satisfaction of spending our time well, and employing it in a worthy manner.

31. Lastly, for the employments, they surely must afford most of contentment, when they are most noble and excellent: They do so at the time in the direct line, they having more of agreeableness to the nature and dignity of a man; but they do yet more so in the reflection, when a man looks back upon his day or week spent, and finds his business has been worthy of him, it exhilarates and revives him, enables him to pass his own approbation on himself, and, as it were, to anticipate the *Euge* he shall one day

receive from his great Master. But he that gives himself only the idle divertisements of a child, or sets to the baser drudgeries of vice, cannot reflect without confusion: Which is so well understood by such persons, that they are fain to take sanctuary in a total inconsideration, never daring to ask themselves, What have I done? Which bears full testimony to the excellency and felicity of ingenuous employments; since they that decline those, are forced also to decline themselves, grow out of their own acquaintance and knowledge.

32. And now what Objection can there lie against this Duty, which is, in all the parts of it so advantageous and eligible, that it becomes Duty not only to God, but even to themselves, their own present interests and satisfaction? Shall pleasure it self lose its nature, adopt the properties of its direct contrary, and become irksome and abhorred, only because 'tis twisted with obedience? Is there so perfect an antipathy between God and them, that 'tis impossible they should have the same objects of delight? Or can no joys have any taste with them, that are not the causes and fore runners of eternal sorrows? This were such a degree of perverseness, as common charity bids me not to expect: And I see not what else can evacuate the pleasure that attends the improvement of this talent of education.

No reasonable objections can lie against this Duty in any of its branches.

33. After all this, I foresee it not impossible that some may plead an exemption from this obligation, by affirming, they want the ground of it; that they never had this Education. I am not willing to fansie there have been so many unjust and unkind parents, as may qualifie any considerable number of *Gentlemen* for this plea: But to those few that can really make it, I shall not think the foregoing discourse wholly impertinent; for, by shewing them the Advantages of what they say they thus want, it may incite them (not to murmur at the negligence of their parents, but) to attempt the repairing of it, by becoming their own guardians, putting themselves into discipline, and by the strict laws of Reason governing and restraining those passions, which by the liberty of their breeding have got head; by this means supplying to themselves the first part of Education. And the like may certainly be done for the latter also, if they will but deposit that common error, of thinking it more manly to be ignorant, than to learn; and be content to put themselves in a course of erudition, which a man may do for himself in his closet, as well as a tutor may do for his disciple in a school; and though he want many of those Advantages the other hath, yet 'tis possible they may be in a good degree supplied by that industry and desire, which all those are supposed to have, who are thus their own pupils; and there want not instances of the success of them who have thus attempted, but I confess there are too few examples of the attempt, men being apt to sit down contentedly under this want; whereas, let the same persons have an entailed estate alienated from them by any act of their fathers, they are not then so tame, but will struggle to the utmost to recover their rights. Yet certainly an ingenuous Education is as properly the birth-right of a *Gentleman*, as any the most firmly settled inheritance can be: Why should they then acquiesce in that so injurious an alienation, and not seek by all endeavours of their own to retrieve this so precious a possession?

The want of Education ought to be repair'd by our own particular diligence and industry afterward.

SECT. V.

Of the Second Advantage, Wealth.

1. THE second Advantage we are to consider, is that of *Wealth*; which that it is a blessing, will, I know, readily be assented to by all, mens desires and earnest pursuits after it sufficiently evidencing the general esteem is had of it. Yet though the conclusion be right, it is to be doubted, many infer it not upon due premisses. 'Tis not Riches, simply considered, that are the felicity, much less those luxuries to which they are often made to minister; but they are like to a fertile ground, which, if left without culture, none bears so rank weeds, but if rightly husbanded, yields abundant profit; and thus to manage and improve them, is not only the interest, but the duty of all those to whom God hath committed them; this being the one designed Advantage for which they were intrusted to them.

The second Advantage on the Gentleman's side is Wealth and Riches;

2. Several improvements there are, of which they are capable: But before I proceed to them, I must mention one part of duty, as fundamental to all the rest, and that is, the well-husbanding of them; not in a figurative, but real sense, the having such

whereof they ought to be provident and good husbands,

such a provident care of those goods and possessions, wherewith God hath bless'd a man, as may secure them from that consumption, to which carelesness and sloth will infallibly betray them. This surely is obligatory in many respects: First, in thankfulness (I had almost said civility) to God, who having dispens'd them as a liberality, 'tis ingratitude, yea, affront, to give them no regard. Secondly, in justice to a man's posterity: He that has received a fair inheritance from his ancestors, if he suffer his supine negligence to cut off the entail, he defrauds those that were to have succeeded him in it, and becomes that *troubler of his own house*, to whom *Solomon*, Prov. 11. 29. assigns no other *inheritance* but the *wind*, which is indeed all such a person is like to derive upon his issue, the common air being oftentimes their only patrimony. Thirdly, in order to all those ends to which wealth was designed by God, which depend on this, as accidents on their subjects, and so are all at once evacuated and nulled by the dissipating of that wherein they are founded. All which considerations do naturally inforce upon men the necessity of a prudent managery.

and rest contented with their fair portion of worldly goods.

3. This being supposed, and the person having, as in our law-forms is usual, covenanted to stand seized of the estate; let us now see what are the proper uses to which it is to be limited.

In the first place, we may rank that of contentedness in his portion; which though to one that is to wrestle with want, it might seem a hard precept, yet to him that flows with abundance it might be thought rather a needless than difficult injunction, if experience did not testify, that contentment is oftentimes as great a stranger in palaces as cottages.

Rich men may chearfully enjoy, so they do not abuse their Wealth;

4. Of this excellent both virtue and felicity there are two parts; the one a chearful enjoyment of so much of his Wealth, as may decently (I say not, vainly) support him in that quality wherein he is placed: God does not make rich men such mere conduit-pipes of Wealth, that they must pass all without retaining any thing themselves; but rather like the earth, which though she conveys the springs through her veins, yet is allowed to suck in so much as may give her a competent refreshment; and he that does this moderately, and with a thankful reflection on that liberal providence which thus *gives him all things richly to enjoy*, 1 Tim. 6. 17. falsifies no part of his trust, nor abuses his stewardship; this being as it were the allowed fees of his place, a pension allotted him by the bounty of his Lord.

yet ought to set bounds to their inordinate and covetous desire after more, when they have enough already.

5. The other part of contentment is that by which the desires are terminated within the bounds of his own possessions, and not suffered to range wildly into other mens, like *Ahab's* into *Naboth's vineyard*, using their Wealth as anglers do their fish, to bait hooks for more, by making it an instrument of extorting from others; which is so great a guilt, that it nearly concerns them to secure themselves against it, by a perfect satisfaction in what is properly their own. Nay, even in what is said there is caution to be had, that there be not too eager and vehement endeavours of multiplying it; and that not only by an unlawful commixture with other mens, which is the sin either of oppression or fraud, but even from its own stock, for that may be covetousness, and is surely a direct opposition to the divine dispensation. For when God hath given a man a full fortune, and by that manumitted him from those carkings and solicitudes to which needier persons are exposed, for him to make it his grand business to project how he may add to that heap, or in the Prophet's phrase, *lade himself with thick clay*, Hab. 2. 6. what is it but the degrading and pulling himself from that sphere wherein God hath placed him, a voluntary sale of himself to the gallies or mines? In this respect therefore I may not unaptly apply that exhortation which the Apostle makes in another, *Gal.* 5. 1. *Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.* Let not him whom God hath by a gracious and peculiar providence exempted from this meaner servitude and vassallage to the world, relinquish that so valuable a privilege, give up his *ear* to be *bored* by *Mammon*, when God proclaims a *jubilee*. Yet 'tis possible the quality of some mens estates may be such, that they may be capable of advancement by a moderate and easy industry, such as may no way divert them from more excellent employments, but may rather be a recreation than a toil: And in that case I know no obligation lies on them so to defy an improvement, as not to choose a profitable before an expensive divertisement, to spend those vacant hours upon that, which remain by way of overplus, from more worthy designs and entertainments. But the perpetual solicitous pursuit after more Wealth is certainly a culpable inordinacy, as being inconsistent with that contentment and acquiescence, which is the duty of every man for whom God hath thus liberally provided; and such as will besides be likely to undermine another main part of this obligation.

6. Such, in the next place, we are to account the charitable dispensing of his store, to supply the indigencies of wanting persons; which surely is to be look'd on as the grand and most considerable end of his receipts. *God*, who is the common Friend, as well as Father of all men, is not to be imagin'd so partial, as to provide pomps and luxuries for some, and in the mean time leave others destitute of the necessary supports of life; yet if we look no deeper than the visible portions of poor and rich, there is no evidence of the contrary. But when we examine upon what conditions and proviso's that abundance is conveyed, we shall have no temptation so to asperse or *charge God foolishly*: For though we have not dispensed so immediately to the poor, yet he gives them as it were bills of assignment upon the plenty of the rich, a right to be supplied by them: So that the difference seems to be only that of an elder and younger brethren; the elder usually carries the bulk of the estate, but then that is charged with provisions for the younger; and if the quantity of those be not distinctly express'd, but left indefinitely, that act of trust in the father lays the greater obligation on him, not to deceive it by too mean and scanty a distribution; for now himself is become a father to them, and therefore should proportion his bounty by the tenderness and bowels of that most affectionate relation. And this may not improperly be deemed one reason, why among such multitudes of commands of charity in the Gospel, there is yet none that expresly allots the proportion of our alms; that by this act of confidence, as it were, men might be obliged to the higher liberality: And he that shall make this incentive to it a pretence to excuse the want of it, is sure a most criminous perverter of the divine intention, treacherously countermining God's sacred arts, as if 'twere not enough to rebel, unless in a further contempt he assaulted him with his own weapons. Certainly God never designed *Lazarus*'s portion should be made up only of the *crumbs from the table*: For though indeed *Dives* is taxed that he gave not them; yet if he had, such a dole would sure never have rescued him from the place of torment. He who rests in a rich man's bosom in Heaven, is to have some proportionable treatment from those on earth, some more hospitable reception than a lying at the gate, some better chirurgeons than dogs to cure his sores; and those that refuse it him, must be presumed to contemn not only the *Lazarus*, but the *Abraham*, yea, the Heaven too that receives him; since that which qualifies him for an admittance there, is not able to recommend him to their least regard.

Charity in relieving the poor and necessitous is a duty bound upon rich men.

7. I shall not attempt to proportion mens Charities, since God hath not; yet there are some general measures to be made to bound them on the sinking side, that they fall not to too scandalous a lowness; which having been done already by a * better pen, I shall refer the reader thither. But those yet leave mens compassions full scope to grow up to what greater height God's grace and mens exigencies shall advance them: And surely the latter may sometimes be such, that it will become every rich man not only to rifle his coffers, pour out whatsoever his superfluities have there amassed, but also to defalk much of his own accustomed enjoyments, cause the razor to pass even upon his whole equipage, to cut off all excrescencies, all exuberant expences, that so the stream may run the fuller in that one channel, which God's providence thus cuts out for it: Whether this may not be a proper season for it, I leave every considering person to judge. At the present I shall beseech every man to whom God hath given Wealth, sadly to ponder how scandalous a thing it will be for him who has been the object of so great bounty, to decline the being an agent in any; to discover himself to have suckt in nothing of the virtue amidst such an affluence of the commodities; and to defie the example of that liberality by whose effects he lives. But withal let him consider the danger of it also, how dreadful a guilt (and consequently vengeance) he draws upon himself, if he shall defeat this so main end of his receipts. It is indeed a complication of many crimes, not only against man, but God also: I shall instance only in two most generally decried, and yet most eminently contained in it, unthankfulness, and falseness.

The measure and proportion of our Charity is not mentioned in Scripture.

* Dr. Hammond's Practical Catechism.

8. God, in his wisdom discerning, that equality of conditions would breed confusion in the world, has order'd several states, design'd some to poverty, others to riches, only annexing to the rich the care of the poor; yet that rather as an advantage, than a burden, a seed of more Wealth both temporal and eternal. Now in this division of men, those on whom he hath caused the better lot to fall, can owe it to nothing but his gracious disposal; and therefore had been certainly obliged to submit to any the most difficult tasks he should have dispensed to them. But now that in his great indulgence he has so tempered the command, as to render it not an allay, but an enhancement of the mercy, he that gives it only a bare tastless compliance, betrays himself to want a just sense of it; but he that flatly resists it, is in the most transcendent

Uncharitableness is a sin of great ingratitude and perfidiousness.

degree barbarously ingrate. Nay, I think I might have laid the charge higher, and call'd it malice; for what beneath that can provoke a man thus to resist his duty and interest together?

9. Nor is this all, 'tis also the greatest perfidiousness: Every rich man is, as I said before, God's steward, and particularly intrusted to provide for the indigent parts of his family, such are the poor and needy. Now if he leave them destitute, and suffer either his riot or covetousness to feed upon their portions, what more detestable falseness can be committed, not only in respect of them whose right he thus invades, but of God also, whose trust he abuses? Many other enormities there are in uncharitableness, which, as so many mis-shapen limbs, concur to the making up this deformed monster; but I shall suppose it sufficient to have pointed out these two, which being the most professedly contrary to ingenuity, I must hope will carry a very averting appearance to those who so especially pretend to that quality.

Rich men ought not to make their Wealth the occasion either of Pride or Confidence;

10. To this positive part of duty, the being *rich in good works*, we find the Apostle connects a negative, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. *Charge them that be rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.* And we need not resort to implicit faith in the author, to persuade us of the great propriety and fitness of these cautions; 'tis too evident that Pride and Confidence are diseases that usually breed in full and opulent fortunes; and as they spring from the same root, so do they, like neighbouring branches, mutually shelter and support one another. He that is high-minded abhors the submission of any foreign dependance, and therefore gladly anchors on any thing he can call his own; and thinking his Wealth most properly so, he has as great an aptness as holy *Job* expresses an aversion, to *make gold his hope, and to say to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence*, Job 31. 24. On the other side, he that trusts in his Wealth, is by that fortified in his Pride. It is *Aristotle*'s observation, that *Wealth makes contumelious* and insolent; which I presume he infers not only from experience, but reason also; for the ground-work of humility being the sense of impotence and defect, he that assumes a self-sufficiency, undermines that foundation, and instead of it lays the *basis* of the quite contrary temper, all haughtiness and elation of mind. A memorable example of this we have in the insolent reflections of *Nebuchadnezzar*, Dan. 4. 30. which had withal so dismal a consequent, as methinks should, like *Lot's wife*, remain a perpetual monument, to deter others from all approaches towards the like vanity.

because they have nothing but what they receiv'd from the free grace and bounty of God,

11. And certainly it is a most important concernment of rich men, to fence themselves against this double temptation; to which purpose they can hardly find a more compleat armour, than what they may borrow from one short sentence of the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 4. 7. *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* Let them look on themselves as meer receivers, and then with what pretence can they pride themselves in that wherein they are barely passive? Nay, indeed, if it be throughly scann'd, these receipts imply cause rather of shame, than boasting; the being filled from another's hand is a sure argument (and tacit reproach) of a natural and original emptiness; and if God have dealt so liberally with them, they may collect, 'tis in compliance not with their merits, but infirmities; his having made them rich, is a strong presumption, he saw them not prepar'd to be innocently poor: And sure pride must be a subtle Alchimist, that can hence extract matter of vanity, and might with equal logick have persuaded the *Jews* to glory in those indulgencies, which were granted them only for the *hardness of their hearts*.

which may be withdrawn and taken from us at his pleasure.

12. In like manner, if they reflect on their *Riches* as received, it renders them also a most unfit object of *trust*. For if they were given, they may also be taken away. We hold all by that old *tenure*, which the lawyers style *alodium*, because it is from none but God: And his gifts (of this kind at least) are never so absolute, as to exclude power of revocation. He then that enjoys a thing not upon right, but bounty, must ask his benefactor how far he is to presume on it. And if they would do so in this case, they would soon be resolv'd how little confidence were to be reposed in Wealth. They may hear *God*, the great patron, tell them, by *Solomon*, that *Riches make themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle*, Prov. 23. 5. by *Christ*, that the *treasures* which they lay up here, are liable to the *moth, and rust, and thieves*; and by the *Apostle*, that they are *uncertain Riches*. Nay, indeed, if they would but ask themselves, their own daily experience and observation, that would bear the same testimony. Every day almost gives some renewed instance of it. What multitudes of accidents are there, to which mens goods are liable? A rough wind, a tempestuous sea, sinks at once the merchant and his ship; an ill season, an hungry soil, eats out the husbandman: And they who run not either of these hazards, those whom

 neither

neither the water nor the earth swallow up, a fire may yet consume. And can there any security be fansied in that Wealth, which is thus a prey to each element single, and yet more often to them united in man, to whose frauds or violences more have owed their impoverishing than to any of the former accidents? And now what greater infatuation can there be, than to place a trust on that which is so flitting and unsteady, to lean on a broken reed, or in *Solomon*'s phrase, *to set one's eyes upon that which is not?*

The uselessness and insufficiency of Riches in many cases of necessity.

13. But if by an impossible supposition, we should imagine Riches to be as permanent, as they are indeed transitory; yet unless they had as well *strength* as *constancy*, they could with no reason be depended on. He that stays by his friend to the last minute, if he have no power to assist him, is only a spectator, not a reliever of his sufferings. And alas! how many miseries are men subject to, in which Wealth can give them no aid! Is a man afflicted in his body with pain? The *Indies* are not a competent price for a minute's ease, an hour's sleep. Is he persecuted in his name with reproach? 'Tis not whole *ingots* of gold that will stop the mouth of fame: Nay, oftentimes the obloquy is it self meerly the progeny of his Wealth; that breeding envy, and envy detraction. But if the sore lie yet deeper, if it be the *soul* that suffers, that is yet farther removed from possibility of relief this way. If it suffer as a slave under the dominion of sin, no treasure can redeem from that vassallage. Wealth does indeed too often by administring temptation, strengthen those chains, but it cannot break them, as appears too evidently by the number of such rich bondmen. If it groan under the guilt of sin, labour under the terrors of an accusing conscience, alas! gold is no balm to a wounded spirit; the luxuries which that has supported may help to pierce, but it has no power to heal. Or lastly, if the soul fall finally under the punishment of sin, there is no commuting that penance, buying off that smart: Riches abused may indeed swell the account, and multiply the stripes, but they can never bribe the remission of any. The Wise man hath assured us this, *Prov.* 11. 4. *Riches profit not in the day of wrath.* Nor does this carry any opposition to the counsel of our Saviour, *Luke* 16. 9. of *making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*: For he refers not there to any natural or inherent property of riches, but only to that extrinsick and accidental advantage may be made of them, proportionably to what was said before of the *unjust steward*, whose dextrous managery was it that rendred his Lord's debts so useful to him; not that they had any proper innate virtue to secure him from the necessity either of begging or digging. And therefore we see *Christ*'s words run not in an annunciative, but an exhortatory style: He tells us not that *mammon* shall make us friends, but excites us to make that our own care, and by a prudent disposure to make it subservient to an end above its native efficacy. But all this is sure very reconcileable with that natural impotency we have observed in it. Wealth charitably disposed may have excellent effects, but yet those are to be ascribed to the charity, not the Wealth, which still remains in its own essence the same unactive lump in the chest, that it was in the mine; like the heathen deities, unable to protect its most zealous idolaters. As a further instance whereof, I may add that which will sound very like a riddle, that Riches cannot deliver even from present want: Which yet is demonstrably true in all those rich misers, whose bellies are lank, while their coffers are full; a sort of tantalized creatures, not peculiar only to this latter age, for we find them described by *Solomon*, Eccles. 6. 2. *A man to whom God hath given Riches, Wealth, and Honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof.* So insignificant a thing is Wealth, that without the addition of a new power, it enables him not to receive the least benefit from it.

14. When all this is considered, what is there in Wealth that can invite the least confidence, since it appears so utterly unable to secure men in their most important interests, nay, to do that which it most immediately and most colourably pretends to, the keeping them from want? And therefore he that will not run himself upon that sad defeat of being disappointed in his trusts, failed in his greatest exigents, must look out for some firmer ground whereon to build.. But alas! our soil affords it not; all here below was long since pronounced by one that wanted neither wisdom nor experience to be vanity. Such mutations and vicissitudes attend all sublunary things, that he that attempts to erect any durable satisfaction on them, outdoes the folly of that absurd architect Christ mentions, and builds not on the *sand*, but *water*: And in this sense the world is still under a deluge, not so much dry ground, as where a dove may rest her foot.

15. We

Our chief help and trust, notwithstanding all our Riches, ought to be in God the giver of them all.

15. We are then driven, by way of necessary refuge, to that which should be our voluntary choice, to come home to the *Ark* to shelter our selves under his wings, where alone we may securely rest; and according to the advice which the Apostle subjoins to these cautions, to *trust in the living God.* And to do this amidst all the seducements of Wealth, to see through all those mists which the fumes of plenty raise, and whilst they enjoy the gift, to confide only in the giver, is indispensably the duty, and should be the care of every one to whom S. *Paul* directs this charge, *All that are rich in this world.*

Rich men ought not to abuse their Wealth to intemperance and excess.

16. And such in the last place, are to take notice of another branch of their obligation, and that is to use that Advantage which their Wealth gives them towards the exercise of *temperance;* which indeed can never be known to be truly such, but when there are opportunities and temptations to the contrary. He that hath nothing wherewith to maintain a riot, leaves it doubtful both to others and himself, whether his abstinences be the effects of poverty or temper; but he that has all the fuel for luxury, and yet permits it not to kindle, he approves his sobriety to be indeed his choice, not his fate. And this is a most excellent privilege of Wealth: And though 'tis to be doubted, it scarce finds room in most of our catalogues, yet certainly it merits a principal place, as being much the greatest of all those, which reflect only upon the person himself. This resisting of temptations is truly that heroick courage worthy of those that pretend to honour, fit to denominate a *gallant man.* I wish those who seek that reputation by many rash and unwarrantable adventures, would here entertain their youthful ardours, this being a field where they may be assured never to want combatants. One while *gluttony* presents it self, armed with the allurements of a full and delicate table: And though one would think him but a despicable assailant, that has only the kitchin for his armory; yet experience shews us, those edgless weapons may vie with the keenest, for the mortalness of their effects. At another time *drunkenness* sends a challenge by delicious liquor, chearful and diverting company, and that not without menace of infamy to him, who shall own so much religious cowardise, as to fear to hazard his sobriety in the encounter. Sometimes again *lust* attacks him with the piercing darts, the killing glances of a prostitute beauty. In the mean time, *pride*, the most sly and treacherous of all the rest, is perpetually laying ambushes for him, in the adorations of his flatterers, the vanity of his attire, and innumerable kinds of excesses. And now, what *knight-errand* would wish for more encounters? Or why should men range abroad to invite quarrels, whilst they tamely suffer such troops of enemies to bid them daily defiance? 'Tis they say a *maxim* among the *swordmen*, That *he that has once been baffled, is ever after an incompetent challenger.* I wish it might have this one sober application, that men would suspend all other *duels*, till they have righted themselves on their vices, and by some signal conquest redeemed themselves from that obloquy and defamation, which these mean, yet insulting adversaries, have exposed them to.

Many men to be blamed for neglecting the improvement of their Estates;

17. Having shewed what uses are duly to be made of *Wealth*, let us now look back, and consider whether any of them be ordinarily discernable in *practice.* And here we shall meet with one sort of men who stumble at the very threshold, that fail in that first part of duty, on which all the rest depend: I mean those, who by a supine negligence suffer their *Estates* to moulder, and consume insensibly for want of an easie inspection and oversight. Of such as these former ages have afforded instances, and doubtless the present also, though the number of the luxurious wasters do now so overwhelm them, that they are the less discernable. And though this seem to be the effect only of sloth, yet certainly there are other concurrents to it; generally these two, first, such an over-weening of their Wealth, that they think it inexhaustible; and secondly, an opinion that it is a mean and peasantly thing for a *Gentleman* to give himself the trouble of looking after his fortune. The motives are too ridiculous to deserve a confutation; but in the mean time it cannot but extort pity, to see *families* ruined by such vain whimsies. And what tolerable account can such a parent give to his beggar'd off-spring, to whom 'tis very likely he may propagate the pride and sloth which made the mere managery of an Estate too hard for him, and yet withal bequeaths them the sadder toil of getting one? Nay, what account can he give to God, from whom he received it, in order to several ends, if he thus at once defeat them all? 'Twas a command to the *Jews*, that they *should not cut down fruit-trees*, though it were for so necessary an use as to *advance a siege*, Deut. 20. 19. But this is the hewing down that stock, from which so much good fruit should spring, and that without any pretence either of necessity or reason.

18. Our next view will present us with *another* sort of *person*, who as much transgresses the duty of contentedness in both the parts of it. 'Tis no prodigy to see men whom God hath afforded the portion of the rich, scarce to allow themselves that of the poor; so letting their *eye be evil* even to themselves, *because God is good*. The *Egyptians* were such jealous reverers of those creatures which they worshipped, that he that violated them was in *danger of stoning*, Exod. 8. 26. So these men who have set up their Wealth for their god, pay it so much veneration, that as they are impatient to have it invaded by others, so they are afraid to offer the least violence to it themselves. They have enshrined it to receive their adorations, and it is now become sacrilege (indeed the only one they scruple) to debase it to the supply of their necessities. They are strange austerities which the *votaries* of this deity will endure, even beyond the mortifications of the most rigid *ascetick*. Their whole lives are a perpetual contradiction to all the appetites of nature; yet alas! that infers here no compliance with those of grace, but as if they meant to set up a *third* party in the world, they equally oppose these. And now he that thus oppresses himself, no wonder if he do the like to others, if he extort the utmost that either power or fraud can wring from any. And that this work may not be retarded, he is provided of variety of instruments for it. Sometimes bribery must give him a legal colour to rob his neighbour; or if a witness prove a better *peny-worth* than the judge, subornation shall do the business. Sometimes extortion shall prey upon a needy creditor, and that not only with the slower gnawings of a canker, but with the more ravenous devourings of the vulture. Sometimes the rack is brought out, and a poor tenant fasten'd on it, and there so strained and distorted, that he can never knit again to any competent subsistence. Sometimes again a poor neighbouring prodigal shall be spurred on to further riot, fed with money, that so by a forfeited *mortgage* he may seize on his estate. In a word, 'twere endless to reckon up all the engines of rapine, which this greedy invader hath in his magazine. And of such a one I presume every man will pronounce, that he notoriously violates the precept of contentedness.

and for not being contented with their own, and invading that of their neighbours;

19. But though this be the grossest, yet is he not the only transgressor. There is also another more plausible sort, who though they do not thus seek to increase their Wealth at other mens costs, yet do it too much at their own; whose brains are mere forges of projects, perpetually hammering out some new contrivance for gain, that continually travail in birth of some fresh improvement, suffer all the pangs and throws of a carking solicitude in pursuit of it. I know this piece of *covetousness* hath better luck than the rest, and passes for a creditable thing, under the specious name of good husbandry; but sure if it be throughly penetrated, it will appear no less opposite to contentment than the former. Nor can that guilt be invaded by those that say they seek to advance their fortunes, not out of the miser's design of hoarding up, but out of the more generous purpose of living more splendidly. For sure he that covets more to spend, is as little contented in his portion, as he that covets more to lay up: He that thinks his table too scanty, his equipage too low, is as far from being satisfied, as he that thinks his land too little, his bag too empty. So that 'tis apparent, these arrows come out of the same quiver, though they be shot at several marks.

and coveting more than they have real occasion for;

20. And between both these motives of griping, no wonder if the *duty of Alms-giving* be crouded into a very narrow compass. That excellent virtue of Charity has indeed much of the image and impress of *Christ* upon it: But the world has given it a further kind of conformity with him than he ever design'd; its crucifixion between covetousness and luxury being the counterpart of his *hanging between the thieves*; there wants only one member of the parallel, the *breaking the legs* of these *malefactors*, which God knows our *soldiers*, nay many armies of them have not been able to do. The many instances these times have given of the sudden dissipation of mens idolized heaps, have not yet so disciplin'd the worldling, as to persuade him to *lay up his treasure in Heaven*. And the loud calls of God to weeping, and *mourning*, *and girding with sackcloth*, have most preposterously been eccho'd back with the louder noise of mens revellings and wild jollities. And then they who thus despise the judgment of God, are very unlikely to compassionate the miseries of men; and I doubt there are many who thus answer the character of the unjust *judge*, Luke 18. 4. *that neither fear God, nor regard man*; nay, that far out-go him in inexorableness of temper. He was to be wrought upon by *importunity*; but so petrified are these mens bowels, that no prayers nor tears can dissolve them. 'Tis a much easier task to dig metal out of its native mine, than to fetch it out of the covetous man's coffer. The earth, though she hide, yet she guards not her treasure, 'tis accessible to the industry of any that will search for it: But he, like an *Argus*, stands centinel about his, and sounds an

whereby Charity and Alms-giving is greatly neglected and disabled.

alarm

alarm upon the remotest appearance of a poor suppliant. With what jealousy does he eye any that he can but fansie to come upon that ungrateful errand; and then how many arts has he to prevent the assault? Or if by some extraordinary charm all his eyes have so slept at once, that he happen to be surprized; yet he has so many weapons of defence, that the assailant shall gain little by it, but the shame of an open repulse; being sure to find him impregnable. As for the *voluptuary*, he has so many expensive lusts to maintain, that he has difficulty enough how to gratifie all them in the distribution of his Wealth: They are competitors to each other, yet joyn to keep out that which would be a common one to them all. He that grudges not the wildest profusions of his Wealth, yet thinks an Alms will undoe him: 'Tis the grand business of his life to contrive ways of expence; yet when any object of Charity presents one, he becomes thrifty on the sudden; like the *sensitive plant*, shrinks at that touch; and that open hand of his clutches as fast, as if some convulsion had contracted it. Thus totally have men forgot upon what terms their Wealth was given them, and thereby like miserable chymists, extract poison out of cordials, a curse out of a blessing. Riches were designed by God to be subservient to that compassion which he has implanted in humane nature: But now they are become the means of suppressing and eradicating it. Rich men look upon poor, as if they were creatures of another *species*, things wherein they were perfectly unconcerned. 'Tis *Strada*'s fancy, that there is such a *sympathy raised between two needles touched by the same loadstone, that persons at the greatest distance may by the consent of their motion maintain a correspondency.* I shall not undertake for the truth of the experiment; but however, methinks 'tis matter of reproach to us, that these inanimate creatures should have so much observable accord, as to give pretence for such a conjecture, whilst men who have so many undoubted principles of union both from nature and grace, have quite extinguished all effects of them. That too many have so, there needs no other evidence than the many unsuccour'd extremities of the poor. For how else can it become possible, that one rank of men should gluttonize, and another starve? that he that thinks it death to endure either the want or moderation of a meal, should never consider what are the gripings of the still empty stomach? that he should without all regret see his own humane nature pining and languishing in the person of his poor brother, whilst in himself 'tis oppress'd with the quite contrary excesses, and might be relieved in both by a more equal distribution?

The great sin of uncharitableness in those that have wherewithal to do with, and yet will not.

21. And now who can sufficiently deplore the wants of the poor, shall I say? or rather the inhumanity of the rich! This surely is the sadder spectacle of the two: The one only suffers, the other sins: And that suffering too may end in eternal refreshments, whereas the other in endless torment. *Lazarus rests in Abraham's bosom*, when the uncharitable *glutton fries* in perpetual *flames*. And oh, that this were throughly weighed! that they would consider, that every degree of unmercifulness they shew to others reverts with a rebounded force upon themselves! Alas! 'tis not so much the poor man's body, as their own souls that sue for their alms: And whenever they shut up their bowels of compassion from the one, what do they but σφραγίζειν ταμεῖα, *seal up* God's *store-houses* and treasuries from the other? When they deny the *crumbs* from their *table*, they deny themselves *a drop of water to cool their tongues.*

Many men maintain their luxury at the charge of the poor, by taking no care to pay what they owe them.

22. But I fear this of illiberality may pass for a moderate crime in this age, when so many are guilty of another so far transcending it. For do we not see divers, who instead of abating their excesses to relieve the poor, do *maintain* their riot upon them? If the *desperate debts* of poor tradesmen were examined, I doubt not, this would appear a sad truth. 'Tis become so fashionable a thing to run into scores, and so unfashionable to pay them, that he is scarce thought well-bred, that has not bankrupted one at least of each trade he deals with. Their only care is to get credulous merchants, who so long as they trust stoutly, shall have fair words; but if once their faith fail, then, as if the *solifidian* doctrine had stretcht it self into traffick as well as divinity, they are pronounced reprobates, and as solicitously avoided, as the *separatist* shuns a person whom he is pleased to call carnal. Posterns and obscure passages are contrived on purpose to escape them; so that a poor creditor must give many days, nay, months attendances, before he can so surprize a *Gentleman*, as to come but to ask his own; and then the best return he usually meets with, is some empty promises to bribe a delay. But sometimes he fares much worse, and, as if 'twere a crime not to starve silently, he is reviled and reproached, and harsh and contumelious language become his only payment. It has been received as a maxim, *That we are all kind to our own creatures:* But this case shews 'tis no universal rule; for those who thus make poor men, are of all other the most barbarous to them in their poverty. But

let those who thus shuffle off their reckonings with men, remember that there will come a day, when they shall not be able to decline their account to God. And with what horror and confusion must they appear at that audit, when they shall be charged not only with the mispending their own estates, but other mens, the having added robbery to unmercifulness?

23. If in the next place we shall reflect on the Apostle's caution, of *not being high-minded*, or *trusting in uncertain riches*, we must turn to our Bibles to be satisfied there was ever any such charge given, there is so little of it to be read in mens practices. Humility is a plant that is carefully weeded out of all rich grounds, accounted a mean degenerous quality, that like treason, *attaints* the blood, and forfeits nobility. *Gentlemen*, though they are for the most part very guiltless of the *Pharisee's* abstinence, the *fasting twice a week*, do yet transcribe the worse part of his copy, the thinking they are *not like other men*, and believe it a justice they owe their birth to do so. They have mounted themselves aloft; and looking down from those pinacles of honour, all below seem little and contemptible creeping things of the earth, *worms, and no men.* I am not so for confounding of qualities, as to exact they should choose their intimates and companions out of the lowest rank: I know prudence as well as pride has drawn a partition-wall between them (though, perhaps, the latter has raised it to an unnecessary height) but I wish it might be remembred, that as the precept of *not eating blood* was designed not for it self, but as an hedge against murder; so that just distance which order recommends between the noble and the mean, is valuable only as a fence against base and ignoble practices; true greatness consisting in despising not the persons, but the vices of the vulgar. Yet here, alas! the scene is quite changed, and many who look the most fastidiously on the one, will yet mix freely with the other; and while they soar the higher in the opinion of their superiority, do yet stoop to the sordid bestialities of the most abject of men. Nay, indeed, this lure does sometimes make many of them descend even from their punctilio's; and those who at another meeting must have look'd for no other treatment, but what St. *James* describes, *Jam.* 2. 3. *Stand thou there, or sit here under my foot-stool*, shall, in the rounds of good-fellowship be equal with the best: Such a leveller is debauchery, that it takes off all distinctions. But in the mean time, how great a shame is it, that such vicious motives shall have force enough to make them thus degrade themselves, when all the engagements of Christianity are not able to do that which is much less, to abate any thing of those tumours, those swelling conceits of their own greatness, or (in the *Psalmist's* phrase) to make them *know themselves to be but men.*

Rich men are very apt to be puft up with pride and contempt of others on the account of their Wealth;

24. Nor has the *other* branch of the caution any better success among them. 'Tis in many of them too discernable, that they place that *trust in uncertain Riches*, which they should repose only in the *living God*; so making his gifts his rivals, and raising him a competitor even of his own bounty. For this we need no other ways of probation than only to examine, whether it is that, in any case of difficulty or distress, they make their earliest and most importunate addresses; for there we may conclude them to fix the greatest confidence. And I fear 'tis too apparent, that where Wealth makes but any, the slightest pretences, promises the least aid, though but remote, and at the second hand, it has most of their applications. Thus in case of *disease*, they whose plenty enables them for the costlier methods of cure, is not their first resort thither? do not their fees flie faster than their prayers? and are they not much hastier to invite the physician than the divine? Nay, indeed, the latter is scarce ever admitted, till the former have forsaken them; a shrewd indication where their prime hopes are built. So again in any disastrous event, the first essay is, whether money will heal the wound. He that is under the displeasure of a superior, seeks to appease by presents, or buys the *friendship* of a *Blastus*, Acts 12. 20. to mediate for him. He that is brought before a tribunal, endeavours with the same golden engine to draw off his prosecutor, to bend and incline his judge. He whose Wealth makes him pursued as a desirable prey, expects his safety even from that which is the original of his danger; and as if like a *scorpion* it alone could cure its own sting, tries whether a part will secure the whole. And in the mean time no attempt is made to call in God to their rescue; as if he were an idle, unconcern'd spectator of humane affairs, or so inconsiderable an allie, as not to be worth the care of engaging him on their side. Nay, even in their last and dreadfullest danger many seem not to quit their dependance on their Wealth; some *testamentary charities* must then do wonders for them, and pass for all those *fruits of repentance*, which should secure them from the *wrath to come.* Even those that have drunk the blood of the poor, suffered the most of it to incorporate into their estates; think by disgorging some small part of it (which perhaps lies

and prone to trust in uncertain Riches more than in the living God.

crude, not yet so digested) in a *legacy*, to ease their consciences: So adapting their restitutions to their rapines only in this one respect, that those as well as these are of another man's goods; they never commencing till death hath disseised them of all propriety, as if the *iniquity of the fathers* were in this sense to be *visited upon the children.* Thus *their Wills* become their only pass-port to convey them to *Abraham's* bosom; and by thus *cajoling* the poor at parting, they trust to extinguish the clamours of all former oppressions, and in spite of *Solomon* will hope, that *riches shall profit in the day of wrath.* It will not here be pertinent to enquire how many other objects of trust they have, which divert them from that one, to which the Apostle directs them. It may suffice in general to say, that none can be supposed indeed to *trust on the living God*, but those who by sincere piety qualify themselves for his protection; according to which measure 'tis to be feared, many even of the fairest pretenders will be excluded.

Riches are too often a temptation to luxury and wantonness.

25. If now we proceed to the *last* part of the *rich man's duty*, the exercise of *temperance*, we may without an *augur* divine the return of that inquest. For it having formerly appeared, that they turn that stream which should flow in charity, to make the fuller current for their Luxury, 'tis visible they are far from designing any self-denial. But if that inference were not proof enough of it, they daily give us ocular demonstrations: What studious provisions do they make for the flesh, *to fulfil the lusts thereof?* Rom, 13. 14. Nature affords not meat delicate enough for their palates; it must be adulterated with the costly mixtures of art, before it can become *genteel* nourishment. And in this they are arrived to such a niceness, that cookery is become a very mysterious trade; the kitchin has almost as many intricacies as the schools. And the quantity of their meat is not less extravagant than the kind: One that did but examine their *bills of fare*, would think the dogs appetite were the epidemick disease among them, if he did not consider they had eyes to be fed as well as bellies. Nor will they be so ununiform, as not to have their drink bear a full proportion with their meat; and 'twere well if it did no more, that their drinking had but those set-hours of their meals, that so there might be at least some intervals and pauses in their debauches; whereas now many persons allow themselves no longer intermissions, than may just qualify them for a new excess; recover their wits only so far, as may put them in capacity of losing them again.

26. But besides these there is *another sort of provision for the flesh*, of which they are no less solicitous, and which many buy in at very dear rates. The embraces of a wife are as nauseous to them, as *Manna* to the *Israelites*. 'Tis variety they hunt after; and so they might have the *Turk's Seraglio*, they would not stick to take his *Mahometanism* withal. Nay, if that were as agreeable to their reason to believe, as to their inclinations to embrace, they would certainly reckon it a considerable part of the prize, as that which to the present possession superadds a liberal reversion of those brutish delights; and would think they had made a very commodious bargain, to have so exchanged the Christians present purity, and future Heaven.

Wealth oft abused to pride and excess in Apparel.

27. To all these excesses that of their *Apparel* does perfectly correspond: So much cost, so much business goes to it, that one may almost as cheaply and easily rig out a ship, as *set out a Gentleman* in his complete equipage. How many artificers go there to the piecing him up? He that should assign him one to each limb, would much contract the number, which is indeed so great, that if it were computed, 'twould be found it constituted most of the trades in a common-wealth. A strange disproportion, that the little world should so much outvie the greater! and a lively instance it is of the multiplying faculty of vanity, that can improve nature's simple necessity of covering to such an exorbitant excess; and has nurst up the first fig-leaves to such a luxuriant growth, that the *Hercynian oaks* which *Mela* tells such wonders of, are but a kind of pigmy plant to them that thus overspread the world; and from covering of shame, are grown to shadow and darken reason it self, so creating a *moral* nakedness, whilst they hide a natural.

Rich men are generally too profuse and expensive in their Sports and Recreations.

28. To all the rest, we may add their *Sports* and *Recreations*, the expensiveness whereof is no way inferior to all the former. *Gaming* like a quick-sand, swallows up a man in a moment; and how many such wrecks have these latter ages produced? *Hawks*, and *hounds*, and *horses*, &c. are somewhat slower devourers; yet, as they are managed by some, tend much to the same end: So that methinks such men seem to make the same menace to their estates, which *Goliath* did to *David*, 1 Sam. 17. 44. *I will give thee to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.* Such vast numbers of them they have, and those kept with such niceness and curiosity, as if they had a design to debauch the poor animals, and infect them with their luxury. 'Tis now no

news

news in the literal sense, to have the *childrens bread given to dogs*; and it may within a while be as little, to have not only their children, but themselves want it. For prodigality is of the nature of the viper, and eats out the bowels of that wealth which gave it birth; and *Actæon's* fate was both emblem and story, *to be eaten up with his dogs*.

29. We have seen now how much their *practice* swerves from their *duty*: Let us next a little consider, whether they might not be happier, if they were regulated by it. And first, *a prudent oversight* of their *Estates* is sure far from being such an oppressing burden, as some are willing to fancy it. For if it be moderate, and such only I recommend, it is supposed to exclude all painful and disquieting solicitudes; and then it becomes only of the nature of a divertisement, helps them off with some of those spare hours, whose emptiness becomes their load, and which they would else be in pain, and probably at no small cost to dispose of. And I see not why it should not be full as pleasant at the instant, to talk of their own affairs, as of other mens (which yet are the usual entertainment of those that neglect their own;) to take up accounts at home, as reckonings at the tavern: And I am sure 'tis much more so in the consequences of it, as much as peace is above discord and tumult, plenty above indigence and necessity.

A prudent oversight and moderate improvement of their Estates is a great advantage to them.

30. Next for *Contentment*, universal consent supersedes the labour of proving that a happiness, it being unanimously accorded to be the elixir and quintessence of all that pretends to that title; to be to all these outward things, as the soul is to the body, that which animates and inspirits them, without which they are but dead, yea, noisom carcases, pressures instead of enjoyments. This is the true *philosophers stone*, that turns all it touches into gold; the poor man is rich with it, and the richest poor without it. Whoever therefore desires to improve his estate, let him begin his culture or husbandry upon his mind, plant there this tree of life, the shade whereof will yield him a perpetual refreshment, 'twill make him always as rich as he desires to be; and he certainly knows not what he asks, that demands more.

Contentedness with their estates is the greatest wealth and happiness of this World.

31. The next duty, that of *liberality*, may perhaps be thought not to have so amiable an aspect; but it is only by those who look upon it through false glasses: Men generally consider it as a piece of spiritual rapine, an engine framed by divines to force open their coffers, and plunder them without a war. But if they would but turn the right end of the *perspective*, 'twould then have a quite contrary appearance; they would discern that it is the means to multiply, not diminish their store; a more profitable way of usury than any the greediest extortioner hath ever found out. 'Tis *a lending to the Lord*, Prov. 19. 17. who surely is the most solvent debtor any man can deal with, and one who never makes scanty retributions. This, I am confident, might be attested eventually true by all those who have attempted to make the experiment. The only Prejudice that can lie against their testimony is the paucity of those that have so attempted (and would to God men would conspire to solve that objection) for were all charitable persons summon'd to give in their accounts, I doubt not it would appear their bounty had enriched, not impoverished them. I am sure I have met with several remarkable instances of it, but never yet with one to the contrary; and therefore if either reason or precedent may have force, he that considers but rightly his own temporal interest, cannot but have appetite to this duty, in respect of himself. And yet where there are many bowels, this is but a faint inducement, compared with that which arises from the calamities of the persons to be reliev'd. The wants of the poor are loud and passionate orators, such as cannot miss to work upon any, on whom covetousness hath not first wrought the unhappy *metamorphosis* of turning them into stone. And these having once convey'd into a man's mind a compassionate regret, himself groans under that pressure, which he sees crushing the other; and then what can be more pleasant than by a seasonable charity to ease both? None doubts of the receiver's delight; but sure that is short of the giver's, by how much the interiour sense is more subtle and acute than the exteriour. Would God those who make it their trade to hunt after pleasures, would try but this one piece of Epicurism, and then I doubt not they would acknowledge, that all meat is insipid, compared with that which they eat with the poor man's mouth; the most splendid apparel sordid and inglorious, in respect of that they wear upon his back; and all pleasures and recreations joyless and uneasie, balanced with those transcendent delights, which attend the exercise of Christian liberality.

Liberality and Almsdeeds do rather increase than diminish an estate.

32. Nor have they, in the next place, any reason to suspect the Apostle treacherous to their present interest, when he seeks to despoil them of that either *pride* or *confidence*, which their riches are apt to create. For the former, 'tis certain, all haughty persons may very properly interrogate themselves in that form we find, *Wis. 5. 8. What hath pride profited us, or what good hath riches with our vaunting brought us?* It would surely

Rich men ought to watch against Pride as a very troublesome and ungrateful vice.

surely puzzle the most experienc'd man to define what there is in pride, that can afford any felicity. The utmost that can be pretended is, that it is a lively chearful thing to have good thoughts of one's self; but he that can in earnest make this plea for pride, does in justice owe as fair an *encomium* to *Bedlam*; for according to this measure, that contains the happiest people, there being those that are the most highly wrapt in the opinion of their own excellencies. Yet sure we should judge him in good election for the place, that should look upon it with appetite. But admit this might indeed pass for a pleasure, yet it is the parent of a far greater uneasiness, and like a carcase, breeds a worm that devours it self. For he that looks on himself with such a reverence, expects that all others should do so too; and when he fails in that aim (as none so frequenly does as the proud) what disquiets and impatiences is he under! such as infinitely overwhelm all the pleasure of his vain complacencies. A little disrespect from *Mordecai* is able to evacuate all *Haman*'s prosperity. Such a cheat and impostor is Pride, that whilst it pretends to exalt, it debases; whilst it elevates a man above others, it really subjects him to them, puts him in their power to torment and cruciate; and whilst it makes shew of advancing, 'tis but in the same manner that the rack extends the stature, by dislocating the joints. And then I hope 'twill be no unfriendly office, to persuade men to keep themselves from that engine of pain, or to recommend to them such an humility of mind, as may preserve them in that security and composedness, which is fundamentally necessary to all true happiness.

'Tis more safe and happy to trust in God, than in any worldly estate and condition whatever.

33. The very same judgment is to be made of the other branch of the caution, the *not trusting in uncertain riches, but in the living God;* which is most visibly every man's present concernment. He that can entertain a doubt of it, let him but fall into the hands of some treacherous or but impotent person, that shall in some important affairs betray his trust, or deceive his hopes, and then let him tell me, whether it be not a man's immediate and most pressing interest, to build his confidences on the rock, not on the sand? Nothing but the amazing exigencies of a sinking man can excuse the folly of catching at reeds; but he that should deliberately elect such supporters, would be thought as mad, as he is sure to be miserable. Yet this is but the faint and imperfect emblem of him who rests upon his wealth: Whereas, on the other side, he that shelters himself under the shadow of the Almighty, is possess'd of a most inexpugnable fortress. For how can he fail of security, that has Omnipotency for his guard? or be deluded in his trusts, that depends on truth it self? Let these so distant states be compared, and then sure I shall not need to anticipate any man's judgment, but may leave him to pronounce on which side his interest as well as duty lies in this particular.

A great deal more pleasure in Temperance and Purity, than in the contrary Vices.

34. Lastly, *Temperance* also puts in her claim to *pleasure:* Which, I presume, those will be sure to resist, who place that wholly in the satisfaction of the sensual appetite. Yet, I believe, one might take even these men in such a season, when they should be forced to give up their verdict for it. Come to the *glutton*, when he is labouring under the load of an over-charged stomach; to the *drunkard*, when his morning's qualm is revenging on him his last night's debauch; to the *lustful* person, when the torment of his bones admonishes him of the sins of his flesh: And then ask them, Whether *Temperance* be not more pleasant than its contrary? I can scarce think the Devil has any such stout *confessors*, but will then betray his cause. But this virtue is in it self too amiable to need any of these foils to illustrate it; the pleasure of subduing a lust, of denying an appetite, is not only nobler, but greater than any is to be had in the most transporting moment of satisfying them. Every man will call him a brute, that when an enemy is in the field, loses the opportunity of a glorious victory, and exposes himself to certain captivity, rather than forsake his liquor, or other sordid pleasure. And this is the just decision of the present case: Our lusts are our mortallest enemies; and every time they assault us, 'tis in our choice either by resisting them to gain a signal conquest, or else by stooping to those despicable lures they hold out to us, to be vanquished by them. He that chooses the last, if he have any shadow of pleasure, 'tis only that of a *beast*, (like a horse, who though he hath indeed the satisfaction of receiving meat, yet he also takes the bridle, yea, the whip too from the same hand.) 'Tis the former only that is the pleasure of a *man*, which I suppose sufficient to evince to which the difference belongs. For sure, none can think God hath been so unkind to his own image in humane nature, as in the dispensation of felicity to assign the larger share to the *brutes*. And therefore in this particular, as well as the rest, we may conclude, that he is not only the most pious, but the most happy person, that makes the right use of his Wealth.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

Of the third Advantage, that of Time.

1. LET us now proceed to the third Advantage, that of *Time*: Which though men do often so industriously waste, as if it were rather a burden than an Advantage; yet the differing estimates they make of it, when it is near expiring, the passionate *death-bed* wishes of a few days reprieve, witness that it has a real value. For were it an empty, useless thing, it would not then begin to appear considerable, when all other vanities grow in contempt with us. The unhappiness of it is, that men learn to prize it, as they do most other good things, rather by the want than the enjoying; buy the skill of trading with the loss of the talent which should maintain the traffick; and then only come to account it a treasure, when they can no longer dispose it to any benefit; and that disposing alone is it that can render it truly valuable. It is therefore a most necessary providence to learn this art of improvement, this piece of spiritual husbandry, without which a man's self becomes that accursed soil the Apostle mentions, *Heb.* 6. 8. *whose end is to be burned.* Let us therefore a while examine, what are those employments of our time, which may render it most fertile to our present comfort, and future account.

The preciousness of Time best learnt by the estimate dying persons put upon it.

2. Every man says (though perhaps few consider) that *our time here is but a prologue to eternity* elsewhere; and that the condition of that eternity, whether happy or miserable, depends upon the well-husbanding of this Time. That therefore, and that only can be the right managery of it, which tends to make our future estate as happy, as it is sure to be lasting. To this purpose God hath chalked us out some great lines of duty; from whence so many lesser do arise, as will, if we will permit them, twist and wind themselves with every hour of our lives. And though these duties are in the kind of them obligatory to all conditions of men, yet frequenter acts of them are expected from those, whose qualities and fortunes give them more vacancy from secular toils.

The happiness of Eternity depends on the well-husbanding of Time here.

3. For certainly it is not to be fansied, that God, who has put an active principle into our nature, should industriously provide for the suppressing its operations in any; devote such a select number of men, as an *Hecatomb* to be offered up to *idleness*. And yet much less can it be thought, that he should so promote that iniquity, which he professes to hate, as to design them to the pursuits of that, *manumit* them from labour, to leave them freer for vice. And if neither of these can be supposed, if their leisure were not indulged them, either that they might do nothing, or do ill, there remains only a third end imaginable, and that is the doing good; as for the sports and pastimes, the best of them come so near to idleness, and the worst of them to vice, that as the one is not to be allowed any, so the other no considerable part of their time. Now because *none is good but one, that is God*, Mark 10. 18. we can take our measures of good actions only from his prescription; and so those which he has commended as such to mankind in general, point out to this particular rank of men the nature of their exercises; as their especial vacancy and leisure does the higher degrees of them.

God hath allow'd Gentlemen this talent of Time not to be idle or abuse it; but to improve and do good in.

4. And first, Those of *Piety* towards God justly challenge a great share of their *Time*. For whereas God may seem to have limited and confined the poor man's zeal, by that rule of *preferring mercy* to themselves *before sacrifice* to him; he does by exempting the rich from those necessities, tacitly require their *devotion* to swell up to some proportion with his bounty to them, who being freed from those weights wherewith others are clogg'd and incumbred, even nature it self suggests the expectation of their soaring higher. He has put them at a distance from the meaner cares and solicitudes of life, as if he were jealous those might prove his rivals, and keep them from growing into a closer intimacy with himself. And shall this design of his love be defeated? And when he has thus secured himself from one sort of competitor, shall more and baser be sought out, every the triflingest and vilest entertainment be courted to come and supplant him? This were indeed to answer that odious character of the *adultress*, Ezek. 16. 34. which was not *solicited*, but *did solicit*. And those that can make such unworthy and provoking returns to so endearing a kindness, evince themselves destitute not only of grace, but of all degrees of common good-nature. For when he so projects for their familiarity and converse, what can be more inhumane and ingrate, than thus scornfully to decline it? Yet under this charge all those will certainly fall, who do not employ (nay, devote) every day some considerable part

The duties of piety ought in the first place to challenge a share of Gentlemens Time and Leisure.

part of this their vacant Time to the keeping up their intercourse with God, by reading, prayer, and meditation.

The duties they owe toward themselves put in for another share of their Time: And first, the improving of their Minds and Understandings:

5. In the next place, *Themselves* put in for a part. But here I mean not those brutish, sensual selves, which have in many (like *Pharaoh's* lean kine) devoured the nobler and more excellent; but it is the more divine and sublimated part of them, on which their Time is to be laid out. And here they can never want business, that being in several respects a very proper object of their diligence. For first, their *Understandings*, how clear and vigorous soever, attain not their height at once; are not, like *Adam*, created in a state of maturity and perfection, but like his degraded posterity, make gradual motions towards it, advance by several steps and degrees of proficiency; nor can we in this life ascend to such a *non ultra*, as excludes a possibility of growth. So that no advantage of education can supersede the use of after-industry, that being still able to make further improvements, bring in new accessions to their knowledge. And this is so inviting an entertainment, as may very reasonably expect their companies some hours of the day in their studies.

The right ordering and governing of their Wills and Affections is another duty they owe to themselves.

6. But though this be a considerable, yet is it not the weightiest part of that care they owe themselves. For as the soul, consider'd in its *intellect*, may thus become their pupil, so in its *morals* it has often need to be their patient. For though in its original constitution it was perfectly pure and healthy, yet by inhabiting in this pest-house, the flesh, it hath contracted much of its contagion; and by how much the more delicate and refined its composition is, so much the more mortal are the diseases to which it is subject. It will therefore require a close and wary attendance. A physician that has a nice and tender patient must be very assiduous in his care, observant of all symptoms, watchful against all accidents. And so certainly should men be here; they should make daily observations how their ghostly strength encreases or decays; what humour most predominates, whether choler boil up into rage, phlegm freeze into sloth; whether the sanguineness of their temper make them lustful, or the melancholy revengeful, and accordingly apply their spiritual purgatives, the baths, or the *palæstra*, prescribe rules of diet and exercise. And doubtless, whoever makes these daily strict inspections into himself, will by the inestimable benefit he receives from it, be taught how great a blessing his *Time* is, and how much a greater to have grace thus to employ it.

The duty they owe their Neighbour requires another share of their Time.

7. But though a *man's self* be a *province* wide enough to take up a good part of his Time, yet must he not so engross it, as to defraud his *Neighbour*, who has also a right to share in it. God having made man after his own image, has (as part of that) stamped upon him the bounty and communicativeness of his nature: And therefore when we live wholly to our selves, we rase and deface that impress. And when 'tis remembred, that the heinousness even of *murder* is by God pronounced to arise from the *violation of his image*, Gen. 9. 6. parity of reason must conclude this no light guilt. Nor is it only our goods we are to impart (for that were a very partial transcript of that bounty we are to imitate, which gives us so much besides) but in general whatever other ability we have, by which our Neighbour may receive advantage: And so a man has as many employments of his Time, as he either finds, or can make opportunities of doing good to others. I say, *make*; for sure, since God hath constituted love to our Neighbour one of the fundamental laws to mankind, we are not to look upon it only as an accident or casualty, but as a main and deliberate business of our lives; not refer it wholly to chance, whether ever we shall do an act of this kind or no; but industriously seek out and improve occasions. Thus we find the liberality of our blessed Lord represented to us in the *parable of the great supper*, Luke 14. 6. where there was not only liberal provisions made for such as would come in, but importunity used to draw them, particular invitations made to the *poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind*; and when that brought not in guests enough, the *highways and hedges* were to be ransacked, and a general press, as it were, made of men, to receive not the earnest-peny of death (which is usually the signification of our press-money) but the antepast of eternal life. Oh! that all those who pretend to greatness of mind would copy out this munificence, that they would prevent mens desires, and invite them to come and be obliged by them. For want of this many occasions of doing benefits are lost; the modesty of some, perhaps the pride of others, averts them from requesting those assistances they most need. It were therefore the noblest study a *Gentleman* could entertain himself with, to search the various wants of those within his sphere. But then he must be sure to do it with a candid design, the more opportunely to apply himself to their aid; he must not treacherously enquire who wants knowledge, to deride, but instruct them; not hunt out a debauched person, to

make

make him his companion, but his convert; not find out quarrels to foment, but compose them; in a word, not pry into other mens concernments, like a busie-body, but a friend; not to comply with his own curiosity, but their need. And now, he that pays a just tribute of his time to these three grand duties, will (when the other dues to nature, temporal affairs, and necessary civilities are deducted) not have much to sacrifice either to idleness, or vice, but will rather think he wants Time, than business.

8. But alas! the full leisure they generally find for the direct contrary employments, witnesses too irrefragably that they are not thus taken up. It is true indeed, we find God often in their mouths, but it is rather in oaths, than prayers; as if they meant their profanations should be the only testimony that they believed a Deity. How many are there such profess'd votaries to *Bacchus*, that their knees are reserv'd only for him, never to be bent but in drinking of healths; that seem to have enacted to themselves the profaner part of *Darius*'s law, *Dan.* 6. 7. that of *asking no petition of God*, only herein outvying him, that theirs is for indefinite, not limited Time; who reckon saying of prayers among those pedantick tasks of their childhood, which expire with the rod and *ferula*; and can never think fit to debase their more manly state to it, unless perhaps a restless night may force them to call it in, to supply the place of a more usual and pleasing *anodyne*. Whether this be not the pitch of many *Gentlemens* Devotion, I appeal to any that observes their practice.

But the Gentlemen of this age find little Time for piety and devotion;

9. Nor have they much more to do in the library, than the oratory, unless it be stored with *romances*; any deeper sort of reading is as formidable to them, as the mines or galleys; nor do they without wonder look at those who can voluntarily set themselves to tug at those oars. But divinity is beyond all others under prejudice with them, decried not only as a crabbed, but *ungenteel* Study; so that upon pain of reproach none are to know more of it, than may just qualify them to deride it; or read the Bible to any other purpose, than to enable them to blaspheme God in his own stile. If these men may be said at all to converse with God, it is in the same manner that the *Pharisees* did with our Saviour, with the insidious design of *entangling him in his talk*, Matth. 22. And sure, the more Time is thus spent, the worse.

and as little for serious and profitable studies.

10. Proportionably to this they acquit themselves of the *other* parts of this duty; that *Time* which they should bestow either in preventing or curing their spiritual maladies, they lay out wholly in contracting or encreasing them. They have made a most strict league with the flesh, and, like faithful confederates, they omit no endeavour to strengthen its party, to supply it with fresh forces; the expence of the *whole day* is managed wholly in order to that end. Thus that they may be sure to keep their lust high and vigorous, they give it a nourishing breakfast of sloth in the morning, a full meal of gluttony at noon, besides multitudes of collations in obscene discourse and fancies all the day: And with these auxiliaries it need not doubt to maintain the field against poor macerated chastity. So again, lest sobriety should happen to surprize them, and gain but the honour of one day, how vigilant are they to give it the first assault? Scarce a day that they draw not up in *battalia* against it, and seldom miss giving it a total rout; and if sleep, like a mist, befriend it to steal upon them in the morning again, yet that little success is but a preparation to a more signal defeat in the afternoon, which is with many a Time allotted wholly to these skirmishes; perhaps the chace followed all night, nay, pursued so far by some, till an habitual sottishness save them the labour of these quotidian combats. Nor is their pride so affronted, as to be forgot in the distribution of their Time, a good scantling of it is cut out to its use; some in contriving and designing their clothes, and some in putting them on; some in admiring themselves, and some in projecting to be admired by others; some in hearing flatteries, and more in reflecting and ruminating upon them.

The most of their Time is spent in Sloth and Luxury;

11. As for those broken parcels of *Time*, which are not thus devoted to these, or some other set and solemn sensualities, they are gleaned up by Sports and insignificant Pastimes; nay, even some who abstain from the former, do yet so wholly abandon themselves to the latter, that their lives become utterly unprofitable. Under this number I have no intention to include all who allow themselves recreations; I know, some divertisement is so necessary both to the body and mind of a man, that if it keep within moderate bounds, it is but a just debt to himself, and cannot fall under any ill character; but that which is reprehensible in this matter, is the excess and inordinacy of it, the making that a business which should be but a diversion. And this we see too usual with many, who absurdly stretch this privilege of their *gentility* even till it break; pursue their Sports of hawking and hunting, *&c.* so vehemently and assiduously, that e're they are aware, they adopt these their callings; never considering that a falconer or huntsman is indeed as mean a vocation, as those they most despise.

and what they can spare from their debauchery is usually spent in vain Sports and Pastimes.

But

But whatever other paſtimes of this nature any man ſuffers to uſurp his time, he does in it extremely reproach himſelf; tacitly confeſſes, that he is unfit for generous and manly employments, and calls himſelf child, while he thus trifles and plays away his days.

Gaming, as now uſed, is both a great ſin and expence of Time.

12. I know not whether I may rank the great and *deep gameſters* in this file: For though the nature of their employment belong to it, yet there are ſuch conſiderable ruinous effects of it, as ſeem to place it in the number of more ſerious ills. And indeed, though cuſtom hath call'd it play, yet the many anxious fears and uneaſy commotions which uſually attend it, evince the great impropriety of the title, and would more reaſonably have given it a name of the direct contrary importance. But as feigned names are commonly an art of concealing perſons, ſo this trade aſſumes the ſtyle of divertiſement, indeed to diſguiſe its true original, which undoubtedly is covetouſneſs. For what imaginable cauſe can there be aſſigned, beſides the deſire of winning, that ſhould make men venture what they are ſo unwilling to loſe? It is certain, he that plays for a piece, has as much of the divertive part, as he that ſtakes a thouſand: And were that all were deſigned, men need not, and certainly would not ſo profuſely over-buy what offers itſelf at ſo much a cheaper rate. I know this is a motive men think too ſordid to own; but would God they would once learn (in this better ſenſe) to revere themſelves as well as others, and deſpiſe to be prevailed on by what they are aſhamed to avow. But the event ordinarily ſpeaks it as great a folly, as meanneſs, of which there are too many ſad inſtances in the ſhipwreckt fortunes of theſe adventurers. And indeed there is nothing wonderful in it, but that men will be ſo mad as to run the hazard; for that being ſuppoſed, it is not at all ſtrange to ſee them ſink under it. For a man has here to deal not with chance alone (which yet were but a ticklish bottom to embark in) but with ſuch combinations of deceit, that even good fortune it ſelf will not ſecure him; ſo that he that has not learnt to plough with the ſame heifer, is like to make but ſad husbandry of it. And even thoſe that have, if they happen to get ſome few good crops, yet they quite wear out the ſoil with them, forfeit that reputation with all conſidering men, which ſhould let them in to farther opportunities, and leave themſelves to live not ſo much upon their own wits, as other mens follies. It is true indeed, that hath in theſe latter days proved a pretty large *common* to graze on, and ſome have ſeemed to thrive well upon it; but generally ſuch cattle meet at laſt with a pinching winter, which leaves them as bare and meagre as ever. In ſhort, cheating has uſually a reflexed efficacy, and deceives none more than thoſe that uſe it: Yet ſuch a ſtroke hath it now got in gaming, that in moſt companies it leaves men only this miſerable choice, whether they will be active or paſſive in it. Which methinks ſhould be enough to awaken men, as immoderate tyrannies uſe to do, to vindicate their liberties, and reduce gaming from this exorbitancy to its primitive uſe, make it ceaſe to be a trade, and become a recreation: And that too bounded within ſuch juſt limits, that it may not encroach on thoſe hours which ſhould be deſtined to greater concernments. But as it is between this and the reſt, either impertinencies or vices, all their time is ſo preingaged and foreſtalled, that their moſt important intereſt is left forlorn and neglected; they have as little leiſure as will to conſider the poor ſoul, or ſcarce to remember that they carry any ſuch trifle about them.

A great deal of Time is ſpent in idle and impertinent Viſits, or in enſnaring the Innocence of Youth in both Sexes.

13. And now they that thus forget God and themſelves, no wonder if they afford little conſideration to their brethren. They will not be guilty of ſuch an *indecorum*, or deny the body of ſin its exact ſymmetry, by making this part unproportionable to the reſt; and therefore they either allow no part of *their time* to others, or do it to ſuch inverted perverſe purpoſes, as makes the payment worſe than a robbery. Thus many beſtow *viſits* on others, not out of any purpoſe of kindneſs, but either to trifle away their own time, or to make obſervations what they can ſpy ridiculous to entertain their laughter. A myſtery the *London* viſitants are generally well read in, who have put this buſineſs long ſince into a ſettled courſe; ſo that the diſcoveries of one viſit ſets them in a ſtock of defaming, backbiting diſcourſe for the next, and ſo ſucceſſively, *ad infinitum.* So again many who call themſelves *Gentlemen*, much to the reproach of that title, if they can find out a *young heir* of much wealth and little prudence, how officious, how diligent are they in attending him? watching him as gladly as a vulture does the fall of a carcaſe, till they find an advantage to rook him at play, entangle him in ſuretyſhip, or perhaps betray him to ſome mean and unequal match? So if they hear but of a *beautiful woman*, what contrivances, what deſigns do they lay, firſt to ſee, and then to corrupt her; make it a buſineſs to themſelves, as well as a trade to their agents and factors, to ſpring ſuch game? And upon ſuch occaſions as theſe, can liberally ſacrifice their *time*, of which, when any charitable office would borrow from them but ſome few minutes, they are

then such busy persons, they can by no means afford it. A *Nabal's* blunt and *churlish refusal*, or at best, a *Felix*'s put off to *a convenient season*, are the usual returns to such motions. But to anticipate the proposal, to go in quest of such opportunities, looks with them like a piece of *knight-errantry*; has so little of their practice, that it scarce escapes their scorn.

14. And now what a heavy bill of indictment is like one day to be brought in against them, when God, their souls, and their neighbours shall all join in their charge! Oh! that they would seasonably consider how sadly obnoxious they are to it, and that condemnation which will inevitably follow it; that so they may according to Christ's counsel, *Matth.* 5. 25. *Agree with these adversaries while they are in the way*; and by yielding to each of them for the future a just portion of their *time*, compound the business, stop the process against them: That they would remember, that of all their prodigalities, this of their Time is the most desperate, such as is most impossible to redeem, and yet that wherein they are of all others the deepliest concerned. And this they would certainly be convinced of, if their airy fancies could but so condense into earth, as to bring them into any acquaintance with their beds of dust, give them some foretaste of their dying terrors; for let them but sadly think, what they would then give for some few of those days they now study to fling away, and they cannot chuse but infer the necessity of being better husbands. We read in Scripture of the Demoniack's *dwelling among the tombs*; but the Devil has sure changed that habitation; for those whom he now possesses he permits not to converse at all there, as knowing it is the properest preparative to his dispossession. And doubtless it would be the most powerful *Exorcism*, as of all others, so of this evil spirit (this filching Devil, that thus steals from men their precious hours) often to descend into the vault or *charnel-house*, and by serious consideration, how short their *Time* is, to inforce upon themselves a care of redeeming it.

The account that we must give of this lost and mis-spent Time will be sad and heavy.

15. Nor need they fear, that to *redeem their Time*, they must sell their pleasures, give up themselves to a joyless state of life. For though it is true, they must resign their counterfeit, they shall have real delights in exchange; they must part with their glass, but shall have gold instead of it. And as none but a rude *Indian* will repine at that bargain in the literal, so none but a ruder Christian can dislike it in the moral sense. For in the first place, he that employs his *Time* in conversing with God, is not only more honourably and more profitably, but also more pleasantly busied, than he can possibly be any other way. We all say, *That God is the centre of felicity*; but he gives himself the lye that does not withal confess, that the closer acquaintance we have with him, the nearer approach we make to happiness. For whoever believed the sun to be the fountain of heat, and yet feared to freeze by drawing near its rays? Indeed, none but the down-right *Atheist* can with any tolerable logick dispute the pleasantness of this duty. For can any whose faith has set up a God, suffer their fancies to dress him like a fiend? put on him such unlovely shapes, as may beget aversion, deter them from approaching to him? Can they call him a Deity, to whom they will not attribute so much as they will to every ingenuous man, the honour of being good company? This is to be not only profane, but absurd. And if there be any of so short discourse, I suppose him uncapable of conviction by argument: The common proverb hath assigned him his teacher, *viz. Experience.* Let him by frequent, yet reverent addresses to God, grow into some familiarity with him, bring himself within distance of receiving his refreshing influences, and then he will discover how very unkind he hath been to himself in thus long holding off. In human conversations we use not to find the gust and relish of them, till we arrive to some degree of freedom: They that converse as strangers, are under constraints and uneasiness. And certainly the main cause of that disgust men have to this spiritual intercourse, is their unaccustomedness to it. They address to God perfectly as strangers, now and then pay him a slight visit, as it were by way of formality and compliment; and then no wonder if it be neither satisfactory to God nor themselves. But then 'tis sure great injustice to defame that as unpleasant, which becomes so only by their own ill managery; to say there is no water in the well, only because they neglect to provide a bucket for the drawing of it up.

Much more pleasure in spending our Time in the service of God, than in the service of Sin and Vice.

16. In the next place, 'tis sure their *souls* mean them no malice in exacting part of their *Time*. For first, what they bestow in improving and exalting their *understandings*, does not only bring them in advantages in the end, but affords them also very fair accommodations by the way. *Learning* yields such variety of agreeable entertainments, that like the *manna in the wilderness*, it adapts it self to every man's taste; he that likes not one sort, may fit himself with another, and sure he must have a strangely vitiated palate, to whom none of them will relish. I can scarce think nature has produc'd any

The improvement of the understanding in knowledge and learning, affords a great deal of pleasure.

thing so distemper'd; but men take up general and implicit prejudices, and will look on books in no other notion but as taskmasters; whereas, if they would but consider them as companions, they could not miss of one kind or other, to find a pleasant conversation among them.

The great advantage of mastering and governing our Passions and Appetites;

17. As for that portion of their *Time*, which is spent in attendance on the yet more spiritual part of them, 'tis rather a gift than a robbery, to help them to such a way of expence. Ingenuous men think it a prize, when they meet an opportunity to rescue from the sullage of Time any thing that carries the stamp of ancient worth and nobility. But this is a piece of the greatest antiquity, of the noblest, yea, divinest impress. How can mens hours be better laid out, than in restoring it to its primitive lustre, in wiping off that soil wherewith the steam of boiling passions hath obscured it, and by disburdening it of those loads of noxious humours, under which it labours, like good physicians, recover it from a languishing infirm, to a vigorous athletick habit? And sure the satisfaction of this must far exceed all other entertainments. Indeed that which is usually taken up instead of it, can with no justice pretend to any tolerable complacency. No man envies his felicity, but contemns his sordid and abject spirit, that picks out the basest and unworthiest company: And shall it here pass for pleasure, to consort only with the plebeian part of himself, those sensual appetites which are the common people of this little world, to spend all his Time in treating and caressing of these; and in the *interim* let the soul, which is of so noble an extraction, so excellent endowments, stand by neglected, nay, be trodden to death in the croud of this vulgar rabble? Certainly this is a tragedy, that no man could see upon the stage without indignation: Yet God knows this is it men daily act over with applause to themselves. Would God they would once shift the scene, and let the oppress'd soul have its season of triumphing; doubtless they would find it more pleasant to share in its conquests, than in its ruin. We read indeed of some nations, that have by the *rites* of a barbarous religion been forced to make *human sacrifices*; yet we find not that they had so slaughtered humanity it self, as to make it matter of delight. And has our civility so far out-done their barbarism, that it shall be pleasure to do that in spite of our religion, which they did in obedience to theirs? to butcher the man within us, and leave nothing but our outward form and inward guilt to difference us from beasts? He that disclaims this, must necessarily confess the pleasure lies on the other side, in rescuing the spirit from the usurpations, yea tyranny of the flesh; and consequently, that the Time he thus bestows is not lost, but improved to his own greatest present, as well as future Advantages.

The like advantage may be expected in that Time which is laid out for the good and benefit of others.

18. The like may (in the last place) be said of that part of it, which is laid out to the benefit of others, which is that which brings us to taste the most delicious of human delights; the pleasure of obliging being of all those the most ravishing and transporting. And for this we need not the verdict of Christianity; the philosopher attests it, as well as the divine. Nay it is so received a truth, that scarce any man will avow so much ill-nature, as to resist it in discourse, how much soever his practice disowns it. Indeed this is a pleasure of so exalted, so quintessential a kind, that what *Herod*'s auditors said in flattery of his oration, we may say in truth of this, 'Tis the delight rather of *a God than a man*. That sovereign Being, though he were eternally happy in himself, yet as if he had wanted of his compleat felicity, whilst he enjoyed it alone, was pleased rather to create, than want objects of his goodness. And a pleasure to which God himself has given such an attestation, as to make a world in order to it, sure cannot without the most impious contradiction of his choice, be despised by man. And certainly 'tis none of the least of those benefits he hath vouchsafed our nature, that he hath given us a capacity of it, by affording us those powers by which we may advantage and oblige one another; so pointing us out a course, whereby we may not only innocently but successfully entertain *Lucifer*'s design, of being *like the most High*. It really makes men, what the heathens vainly fansied their *hero's*, even *demi-gods*. Oh, that those who think it noble to be aspiring, would thus verify the opinion, by terminating all their wishes and endeavours in this one generous ambition! and then 'tis sure they would not need to be told the happiness of this so deifying an employment.

SECT. VII.

Of the fourth Advantage, that of his Authority.

The Authority which a Gentleman hath over his

1. IN the fourth place, we are to consider the *Gentleman*'s Advantage in respect of his *Authority* over those that relate to, or depend on him. And this, if rightly

rightly managed, is of excellent use, though as capable of being perverted as any of the former. He who has secular ties upon men, may often, by those cords which bind their worldly interest, draw them to a consideration of their spiritual. A tenant who thinks his livelihood concerned in the good will of his landlord, a pensioner, whose subsistence rests upon the bounty of his patron, will strive to model themselves to such a form, as may best suit the inclinations of the person they desire to endear: They are usually wax to him, that are flint to others. But then, as variety of seals make differing impressions, so this flexibleness of theirs may be either abused to ill, or improved to good; this wax may receive the image of a beast, or an angel. It is therefore the duty of those who are possess'd of this Advantage, to use it to the impressing not of vice, but virtue; to contrive how they may most effectually discountenance the one, and encourage the other. And this they may doubtless have frequent opportunities of towards either of those relations forementioned.

relations and dependents, is of great advantage to him, for to impress virtue in them;

2. But to none so often as to their *Domesticks* and menial Servants. These are always so much in their road, that they seem to be marked out by God as their most peculiar province. Every master has so much of the Prophet, that he is *set as a watchman*, Ezek. 3. 17. over his Family, and ought as jealously to observe the approach of any vice towards it, as a centinel does that of an enemy. 'Tis a very pernicious error for men to think themselves no other ways concerned in their Servants, than they are in their horses or oxen, to look upon them only as another species of working cattle, and so they do their business, care not how arrant brutes they be. Whereas they should remember, that they, with themselves are common Servants to the one great Master, and that the subordination of the one to the other is but the wise *œconomy* of their Lord, who has (as in great Families we see it usual) constituted the one as stewards or supervisors to regulate the rest; and then 'twill appear a piece of enormous unfaithfulness to neglect this charge. To avoid which guilt, it will concern *Gentlemen* to have a sedulous care over those that are thus entrusted to them, to make strict inspections into the manners of their Servants, and accordingly to apply instructions and admonitions, reproofs, or encouragements. And that they may not transcribe *Pharaoh's tyranny*, of *exacting brick without straw*, require the superstructure of Christian lives, where there wants the necessary foundation of Christian knowledge, they must provide, that none under their charge be destitute of the means of laying that ground-work, of knowing so much of Religion as may bring them into an acquaintance with their duty. But to give life to all these endeavours, 'tis indispensably necessary for them to avow such a love to piety and virtue, and such a detestation of the contrary, that their Servants may see that there is but one way of approving themselves both to their earthly and heavenly Master.

specially that which he hath in his family, and over his servants and domesticks.

3. If it be here objected, That it is but a counterfeit Virtue which derives it self from the care of pleasing men, and so that this is but to teach them to convert profaneness to hypocrisy; I must yield so far as to confess, that where that continues the final motive, it will never avail any man. But as God often uses temporal and outward occurrences to produce inward and spiritual effects; so it may here happen, that those whose first approaches to goodness were mercenary, and out of compliance to others, may, by coming within view of it, discern it so amiable, that they may after love it for it self. And indeed, considering the rude ignorance usual among the vulgar, 'tis scarce imaginable they should embrace it upon the bare strength of speculation, and therefore must be allowed secular invitations, as baits to allure them. As for those that never advance higher than the mere *form of godliness*, what weight soever it may add to their own doom, yet perhaps that may justly be accounted less mischievous to the world, than the contrary extreme; hypocrisy being a sin that cannot well set up for *proselytes*, because it never owns it self of a distinct party from true piety. And 'tis not impossible, that the example of a feigned Christian may teach others to surmount their copy, and be that in sincerity, which he is but in appearance: Whereas open vice pretends to no such possibility, breaths nothing but contagion, and, like a pest, infects communities. We have therefore reason to conclude, that if this care were generally taken, 'twere a service not only to God, but the commonwealth, which has not more unprofitable, nay, noxious burdens, lying on her from any rank of Men, than from lewd and idle servants, who using their places only as a shelter for their sloth and licentiousness, when that *gourd withers*, know not whither to retire, but usually either live beggars or die thieves: Whereas if *Gentlemens families* were so ordered, as to become seminaries of industry and sobriety, the number of them is so great, that they might be able to send out many colonies of useful and civil persons.

The profession of Virtue, which may be counterfeit at first, may be serious afterwards.

Gentlemen have an advantage of improving their friendship to the most noble ends of religion and morality.

4. There is also another sort of *relative*, viz. *a Friend;* over whom tho' they have not that authority, which springs from this servile stock of hopes and fears, yet they have one of a much more noble descent, and more vigorous efficacy. Friendship has a key to the heart, which it may use not only to let it self into its secrets, but also to introduce its own conceptions, sentiments, and inclinations; it so mixes with the mind, that it may insensibly convey into it any *idea*. Now to use this intimacy to the bringing in any thing base and unworthy, is the vilest treachery; such as is but imperfectly represented by the treason of him, who requites his Friend's hospitality by bringing in thieves or murderers upon him. A guilt so vehemently to be abhorred, that none is to think himself at a sufficient and just distance from it, but he that industriously pursues the direct contrary: He therefore that hath a *Friend*, ought studiously to contrive how he may most promote his advantages; and those not only his outward and secular, but also (yea, principally) his inward and spiritual. This is the only sense wherein 'tis lawful to have designs upon him, and in this he is not only licensed, but obliged to have so. He must here use all friendly stratagems to recommend and endear virtue to him, make his kindness the vehicle, wherein the more gratefully to administer whatever is most wholesome, even reproofs, when they appear so; and yet by taking his own turn in being the patient, evince, that 'tis no assuming humour that creates him a physician. If Friendships were thus managed, it would be indeed a most sacred relation, such as would be above the violations of those petty, trivial distastes which now a days dissolve them. Hearts that are tied together with these consecrated bands, are like *man* and *wife* joined together inseparably by God, and much for the same end of propagation; only herein as far superior to their pattern, as the mind is to the body, the divine excellencies of a Saint to the natural composition of a man. We may reasonably believe they were Friendships of this making, that first brought that name into so much veneration, and were they again reduced to this, no *encomium's* could be too lavish for them. Such a reducement were a work well worthy the spirit and ingenuity of *Gentlemen;* who since they generally profess much reverence to the Word, 'tis pity they should cast away their adorations on an empty shrine. The Heathens had *incantations* to recal their displeased deities into their forsaken images: I wish they would also try some holy *magick*, to bring back somewhat of the primitive divine Spirit to animate this now liveless trunk: That they who justly think it an *ungenteel* reproachful thing, not to have some body whom they call Friend, may think it much more so, not to pay all the real kindness due to that appellation.

But too many do abuse their Authority to countenance and throw contempt upon piety and virtue.

5. Having thus far given an account what are the proper and just employments of this Authority over their several *relations*, our method now requires us to reflect a little on their *practice*, and that in the most we shall find as far swerving from the rule in this particular, as any of the former. So far, alas! are *Gentlemen* from making their power instrumental to the infusing good, that there is nothing more ordinary than to see them dispose it to the direct contrary. The scorn and contempt they publickly cast upon all Piety and Virtue, teaches their dependents how dead a trade that is like to prove to them. And then 'tis very improbable that godliness shall with them cast the scales against gain. He that aims to get an exhibition, or any thing proportionable, will soon discern his way lies in a quite opposite road. He must find out what vice of the *Gentleman* he may be most serviceable to: Sometimes he must purvey for his lust, sometimes for his intemperance; and even when he has cloyed those grosser appetites, yet his pride will always remain insatiable. He must still provide air for that *Chamælion*, lay out his whole breath in flatteries (a more hellish wind than any the *Laplanders* sell.) 'Tis this enshrining his *Diana*, which is the *craft* by which he expects his *wealth:* And therefore whatever other office he executes by starts, a *parasite* is to be his constant trade.

Servants are commonly made the ministers of their luxuries, and their families the schools of vice and intemperance.

6. In like manner, their *Servants* are disciplin'd to be the Ministers of their Luxuries; and not only to serve, but transcribe them. The master's Vices seldom miss to be taken up by the whole house, as if they were to be the cognizances and badges, to witness to whom they retained. And though for this they might very well trust to the efficacy of their bare example, yet as if they could never be secure enough of corrupting their Families, they too often add to it precepts and rules of institution. Thus it is one of the fundamental laws of their hospitality, *That no stranger be sent sober away.* So that their houses may well pass for *inchanted castles;* no man scarce that comes into them being able to guide himself out. They keep, as it were solemn *justs* and *tournaments* of debauchery, to challenge all comers, and have variety of champions to deal withal, combatants of all ranks. In short, *Gentlemens Families* are become

such perfect academies of licentiousness, that the most innocent puny will there in a very short time become proficient. And this, God knows, is the ordinary improvement they make of their Authority; as if they affected to outbid the tyranny of the *Turk*, in sending a halter to his vassals, and making them their own executioners; or thought it a disparagement to their qualities, to go to Hell without an honourable retinue.

7. As for the other sort of power, that which they have over their *Friends* and intimates, 'tis not discernable that they manage that better. Who almost is there that seems at all to advert to the essential part of Friendship? What a rarity, I had almost said a prodigy is it, to find (even amongst those that profess the greatest dearness) any that hath either the courage to give, or the humility to receive an admonition? But instead of those *wounds of a Friend*, Prov. 27. 6. there is nothing more common among them than *the kisses of an enemy*, such mutual soothing in ill, as renders it inveterate and incurable; and like *Joab* to *Amasa*, 2 Sam. 20. 10. *sheds out the bowels*, when it pretends to *kiss*. Nay, as if it were not sufficient for them to nourish those vices they find already planted, they sow new seeds, communicate their personal ones to each other, as if the community of Friendship obliged them mutually to diffuse their poisons. Were many of the closest intimacies now a days ransack'd to the bottom, it is to be feared, this would be found the basis and groundwork of them. He that hath advanced above the beaten road, arrived to the more elevated mysterious parts of wickedness, (*The depths of Satan, as they speak*, Rev. 2. 24.) would lose much of the gust, if he should not get some confident, to whom at once to boast, and propagate his proficiency. Thus sacrilegiously is this venerable relation of Friendship profaned, by being prostituted to the vilest and most detestable purposes; and by this accursed abuse suffers the saddest *metamorphosis*, becomes only a confederacy in sin, a combination and league against what they account the common enemies, God and Virtue.

The friendship which is contracted among them now, becomes a bond of iniquity and combination against God and virtue.

8. These are such wretched perversions of their power, that one would guess it were some great and very considerable weight of *present interest* that should thus byass and distort them. But when that is examin'd, 'twill be found to lie wholly on the other side. The former section gave us occasion to discern, how transporting a delight it is to be the instrument of any good to others. But as there is no good can bear proportion with that which is done to the Soul; so certainly to be an agent in that, must far transcend the pleasure of all other benefactions. He that so dispenses his bounty, as to engage men to virtue by it, is indeed the magnificent person, outvies the most profuse donations of the greatest potentates. They can give but some little parcels of earth, he gives Heaven, and like a mighty monarch, hath kings to do him homage. So he that by well ordering his family makes his servants to be God's, does not only oblige the commonwealth, but is as it were a patriot even to Heaven it self; provides it with inhabitants, and helps to secure it from that emptiness and depopulation wherewith the general wickedness of men seems to threaten it. And then in relation to such his servants, he is of all other masters the most bountiful and obliging: They provide perhaps some petty annuities, he gives a state of inheritance, nay, of eternity.

The great pleasure and happiness they would have of being instrumental to the good of others, especially of their souls.

9. This is a vast munificence, yet that which the arrantest worldling can have no temptation to grudge. A man may thus without a riddle give much, yet part with nothing; nay, acquire that very thing to himself, which he dispenses to others. So that here is no place for the usual (though unjust) objection of *impoverishing one's self*, which is that alone which often deads the relish, or diverts the attempt of other liberalities. And therefore this sort, which is rescued from that one possible allay, must certainly yield the most vigorous and unmix'd pleasure; it being sure, that bounty has in it self so much of agreement with humane nature, as will inevitably produce complacence and delight, where it is not so interrupted or allayed.

Gentlemen by doing good may enrich others without impoverishing themselves:

10. I might here add *ex abundanti*, that there is likewise a *secular profit* attending it. For if *Gentlemen* had their Dependents truly conscientious, they would be of very much more use to them. They might employ them securely, and need no other spies upon them but their own consciences. 'Twould not then be, so many Servants, so many thieves and harpies; but so many factors and traffickers for the masters advantages. So that here again their own interest engages them to this care: Though I confess, 'tis to be wished, that the former more ingenuous motive may be so prevalent, as to supersede all use of this; it being very unreasonable, that God should need auxiliaries from *Mammon*. Yet as once the *Israelites borrowed of the Egyptians*, so it may not be amiss to make this inferior consideration a step to the other more noble; that even they who have yet no gust of that more heroick pleasure, may, on the intuition

By this means their Servants and Dependents will become more trusty and faithful in the management of their concerns:

of

of this worldly advantage, endeavour to improve their Authority to the spiritual good of all that belong to them.

The Pleasure of doing good to a Friend is equal to that which we receiv'd, or do to our selves. 11. But from no part of this performance may they reap so rich satisfaction, as from that which is exercised towards a *Friend*. For as their concernment is nearer in him, than in the former more distant relations; so the Pleasure of doing good to him must proportionably increase; as that heat is most intense which is conveyed by the nearest reflection. He who so maintains his vital station in the great body, as to sympathize with every member of it, must yet necessarily have the most acute sense of what befals those parts, to which he is most immediately conjoined. But there is no stricter union upon earth, than that of a virtuous *Friendship*; and then what can be more satisfactory, than to preserve or advance the health of that, whose maladies himself is sure to feel, to improve and benefit that person, who is thus become a part of him? Persons of quality love to deck and imbellish the place where they inhabit, abhor to dwell in a stye or dungeon: But Friends dwell in each other; and therefore cannot but be delighted in beautifying and adorning those minds they have thus chosen to live in, in purging them from all foulness and pollutions, and rendring them as pure and immaculate, nay, as splendid and illustrious as is possible. Certainly there is nothing upon earth more ravishing than a *Friendship* thus entertained: 'Tis some anticipation of Heaven, where those lines of love, which stretch themselves to every part of the circumference, do all meet in God, as their centre. It is indeed that which surmounts the possibility of an exact description, and reserves its full discovery to be the prize of experience. Let it be tried, and then I doubt not, but he that hath made the experiment, will readily attest the Pleasure of thus employing this part also of his Authority.

SECT. VIII.

Of the last Advantage, that of Reputation.

The Reputation of a Gentleman well manag'd is of great Advantage to him. 1. THE last Advantage is that of *Reputation* and *Esteem*: Which is generally presumed the due of persons of quality, unless where some personal unworthiness hath cut off the entail, and forfeited that right. And though these days have taught the vulgar to defaulk much of that respect, which former ages paid to superiors of all sorts; yet I cannot think the *levelling principle* hath so universally diffused it self, as totally to rase out all impressions of reverence towards them: So that there still remains somewhat of this talent for them to negotiate with. It will be their part so to manage and dispose it, as to bring in profit to their Lord, by making it also an engine to draw men to piety and virtue.

The Advice given by a Gentleman carries more weight and Reputation along with it, than that which comes from a meaner person; 2. This they may sometime do by *counsel*; to the success whereof there is nothing more contributive than an esteem of the adviser; most men being rather apt to consider who speaks, than what is spoken. And therefore persons whose quality and education have prepossest them with an opinion of their wisdom, have a great Advantage towards the working on them. And this it will befit them to make diligent use of, by seasonable advices and exhortations of those whom they shall discern thus prepared for the entertaining of them, to take all prudent occasions to recommend *Christian practice* to them; and by pulling off those disguises which the false measures of the world have put upon vice and virtue, to represent them in their true and native shapes; the one the object of horror and detestation, the other of love and delight. 'Tis the want of this discovery that has given impiety so free a range: It has drest it self up in a counterfeit splendor, false gems, and tinsel gaudery; and in this glittering appearance it marches on triumphantly, receives acclamations, yea, and obeisance too; nay, commands not only the knees (as every prosperous usurper can do) but even the hearts of men. And will none have so much charity, so much zeal for publick concern, as to uncloke this impostor, and shew the dazled world what it is it thus bows to? Perhaps this is look'd upon only as the business of divines; but certainly would *Gentlemen* also set to it, they were like to prove the more prosperous undertakers. What comes only out of the pulpit, passes for *the foolishness of preaching*, 1 Cor. 1. 21. or for the discourses of those whose trade it is to inveigh against sin. All their *thrusts* being of course and expected, their *wards* are as well known too; and we daily see vice approve it self an expert fencer against them. But the endeavours of these would not be liable to those prejudices: A blow from them would come (like the revolt of a confederate) with the advantage of a surprize. And there is little doubt, but by friendly and familiar conferences they might many times insinuate that into mens breasts, which

which the more solemn and authoritative exhortations of ministers often fail of.

3. But counsel will be of little efficacy, if it be not seconded by *example*. They must therefore look their lives be such, as may shew they believe themselves, whilst they go about to persuade others. He that shall with never so pressing arguments dehort a man from that sin, which himself at the next opportunity commits, will never be supposed to have any real ill opinion of it, but rather so passionate a love, that he is jealous any but himself should have its embraces. And then surely this will be so far from averting, that it will excite the appetite of the other to taste of that which he sees is thought so desirable, as to be monopolized.

Specially if he seconds and confirms it by his own virtuous Example.

4. Indeed there is nothing by which they have so universal an *influence* as their example. Things that are set in some high and eminent place, do naturally attract mens eyes to them; so that eminency of condition wherein *Gentlemen* are placed, renders their actions more observable. They are like the *city* our Saviour speaks of, *set on an hill*, and have by that advantageous situation, the means of making their *light shine farther* than other mens. And therefore it ought to be their constant care, by the bright lustre of their exact and exemplary conversations, to enlighten the whole sphere wherein they move. Would *Gentlemen* make this their united design, what a happy constellation of auspicious stars would they prove, by whose benign aspect the sterility of vulgar minds might be cured, and even those clods be inspirited, and rendred capable of excellent productions?

Gentlemen have a great Advantage to draw their Dependents to the love of Virtue and Goodness, by their Countenance and Encouragement,

5. For what can be more *persuasive* to those of the lower ranks to embrace virtue, than to see it made the election of those whom they suppose to have most judgment to discern its value, and so fall not on it blindfold, and who have also all the contrary pleasures of sin within their reach; nay, prostrate at their feet, suing for entertainment, and so are not cast on it by impotence? What a blur and infamy would it cast upon vice, if it were once banish'd out of *genteel* company? And how fair a step would it be towards its exclusion out of all? We see what a natural aspiring the lower sort have to approach to the condition of their betters. And tho' that being now aimed only at their pomps and greatness, be no commendable temper; yet sure it were much in the power of those emulated persons to make it so. For would they so order the matter, that their virtue should outshine all their outward splendors, that it should become the character and distinctive note of a *Gentleman* to be eminently good, this were a way to consecrate even ambition it self, by making it an engine not to rack and torture men, as common ambitions do, but to advance them to all virtuous industry.

which wou'd give Virtue a much greater Reputation among their Inferiors.

6. He that desired to ennoble his family, would then begin at his mind, cast out thence all base and degenerous inclinations, and make himself a *Gentleman* without help of heraldry. Thus haply might they deceive men into piety, and make those emulations, whose first rise was meerly from earth, a ladder wherewith to scale Heaven. And how noble, how excellent a charity is this, and yet of all others the cheapest, it having that proverbial property of charity, *To begin at home!* The being good is primarily a kindness to themselves, and to others only by way of result, and propagation and easie consequence. How unchristian, unmanly, yea, unskilful too will it then be to deny this benefaction, which has that very argument on its side, which is opposed to other kinds of liberalities? That fear of lessening a man's self, which in those contracts and shuts up the bowels, is here in all reason to enlarge and dilate them; for in this case men cannot deny without their own greatest injury and diminution. And sure 'twould justly pass for a prodigy both of malice and folly, for one so to avert the benefiting another, as to incur the greatest damage to himself in avoiding it.

The abandoning of Vice would truly ennoble and make them Gentlemen in deed.

7. But alas! it is not only charity either to others or themselves, which exacts of them thus to promote piety among men. They have brought themselves under another more constraining obligation, I mean that of *justice*, particularly the justice of *restitution;* for 'tis too visible they have been deeply accessary to its decay. So far have they been from advising and exciting men to good, that I fear their persuasive faculties have generally been employed to a quite distant purpose. There are few or none, that by their own pious endeavours do at all abate the need of the priests exhortations; but many that do evacuate their efficacy, by decrying it as the greatest folly, the most unmanly submission, to yield them any consideration. As for their own counsels, they are too often in earnest, what *Solomon*'s was by way of irony, *Eccles.* 11. 9. *Walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes*, encouraging and animating men to all sensuality. And if they discern any begin to startle at the course, to entertain but a sober thought of that dismal end to which it leads; he is to be laught out of that *hypochondriack fit*, taught to look upon it as a spice of frensie. The loud noise of roaring mirth is reinforced to drown that poor whisper of conscience, and by the sound, as it

Gentlemen abuse their Reputation, in giving Vice greater Credit and Encouragement, than otherwise it would have;

it were of those trumpets he is incited to turn to his course, as the horse *rusheth into the battle*, Jer. 8. 6. all arts of encouragement used to embolden him to run fearlesly on to damnation. This is their own known *recipe*——for all pangs and gripes of soul. And if it be not of every day's practice, 'tis not that they have any better method of cure, but such arts of prevention, such means of stupefaction and obduration, that the disease seldom occurs among them.

which they likewise confirm by their own evil Example.

8. Nor do they omit to back and fortify this with proportionable *Examples*; which God knows are so many and so efficacious, that like a dismal cloud they overspread our whole horizon. They who are by God designed as lights to illuminate all about them, have been the instruments of introducing a more than *Egyptian* darkness; thereby exemplifying that aphorism of our Saviour's, *Matth.* 6. 23. *If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*

Gentlemen are grown publickly vicious, and countenance Profaneness in an open and scandalous manner,

9. What a deluge of Profaneness and Impiety at this day overflows this poor nation, is too visible, not only by the direct, but the reflexed beams, those sad judgments they have brought down upon it. And though there be too many springs which feed this ocean, yet there will scarce any be found to have more liberally contributed, than the open and scandalous viciousness of the *gentry*. They who are placed as stars in our firmament, if they dart nothing but malignant influences, what wonder is it if an universal pest ensue? 'Tis they that have brought vice into countenance, made it the mode and fashion of the times, so that people dread the singularity of being innocent; and a man may with less peril of scorn appear in the most super-annuated dress, than own the obsolete qualities of meekness, purity, sobriety, &c. How great and fatal a snare this *creditableness* of sin has proved, I fear there are too many thousands of entangled souls can witness. And on whom can they more properly charge their ruin, than on those who have advanced it to this repute in the world? Mens natural pravity gives them propension more than enough to ill; and therefore it hath been the business of laws both human and divine, to put a bridle upon those inclinations by fear and shame, to restrain their inordinacy; but this converts the bridle into a spur, when those that should discountenance vice, thus animate and encourage it.

which is a great Temptation for the common People to imitate and grow like them.

10. For what a Temptation is it to the vulgar, *to run to all excess of riot*, when they see their superiors have beaten the path before them, and are themselves immerst in the most brutish sensualities? Which of them will endure to be sober, when drunkenness shall be accounted so dignifying a quality, that it may make a peasant company for a lord? When *Gentlemen* are atheistical, clowns will think themselves very modestly wicked, if they be but profane. And when they hear their betters discharge loud volleys of oaths, they will soon find they are as well qualified for that part of greatness as the best. *Their tongues* are as much *their own*, Psal. 12. 4. and will be glad, that by such an easie employment of them, they can be *Gentlemen* so good cheap. 'Twere as endless as unnecessary to enumerate the several sorts of infection, which the ill examples of great men have diffused. 'Tis too obvious in the moral effects, to need any other way of discovery. And I am sure it ought to be matter of the saddest reflection to all who are involved in that guilt; it being a most direful account, which they will one day have to make, who have been the authors of such miserable vastations, turned communities of men, of christians, into herds of beasts, nay into legions of devils.

The sins of great men receive a mighty aggravation from the Number of those that are misled by their Example,

11. Every sin, even of the privatest obscurest person, carries much of contempt and affront to the divine Majesty; but great mens vices are of yet a more giantly frame, they proclaim solemn war with heaven, levy forces, and draw in multitudes of abettors and confederates in their hostilities. And God knows this kind of unevangelical *violence* the *kingdom of Heaven daily suffers*. Oh that the chieftains and leaders of these unhappy troops would at last think fit to sound a retreat; that they would in pity, if not to themselves, yet to their seduced followers, cease thus desperately to rush on upon the mouth of the cannon, the jaws of Hell! And not only so, but that they would also endeavour to bring them into some terms of accord with that omnipotent enemy they have provok'd; by their own penitent and reformed lives, teach them the postures of humility and submission, as they have formerly done that of defiance! This certainly is that to which common equity obliges them; reparation of injuries being confessedly an indispensable part of justice. And certainly there can no injury exceed, nay, equal this of betraying men to eternal ruin: And consequently nothing less than the utmost industry to repair it, can be any competent expiation. God grant all those, whose guilt gives them a peculiar title to this admonition, may own their right to it by a particular and serious application, such as may for the future engage them to the most zealous endeavour of reforming not only themselves, but others, for rescuing their reputation from that foulest blot of being an agent for Satan, and advancing it to that highest dignity of being serviceable to God.

12. But

12. But there is little hope they will rightly consider the use, who are so utterly mistaken in the nature of true Reputation. A *man of honour* is now understood only to be one that can start and maintain a quarrel; that for every the triflingest injury expects like *Lamech*, Gen. 4. 24. to be *aveng'd seventy and seven fold;* that despises the Christian precepts of meekness, long-suffering and forgiveness, as rudiments of cowardice and unmanly pusillanimity, and has no other measure of courage and gallantry, but by an utter opposition to all those. And whilst *Reputation* is thus hung only at the point of the sword, 'tis a very fit instrument to destroy bodies, but sure not to save souls. We find daily many occasions to complain of the tyranny of custom and opinion, but scarce any where so much as in those unjust and absurd laws they have imposed in this matter: Which were they consideringly weighed, would surely evince them such contemptible legislators, as would be enough to dethrone and depose them from that usurped empire they now maintain in the world.

who, for the most part, take wrong measures of Honour and Gallantry,

13. To take only a short and cursory view of them, we shall in the first place find them to be horribly impious. For what can be more so, than thus to tear off those signatures of honour, which God himself hath imprest, and vilifie those whom he hath dignified? God hath pronounced, That it is the *discretion of a man that deferreth his anger,* and it is *his glory to pass over a transgression,* Prov. 19. 11. And again, *He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city,* Chap. 16. 32. But this new notion of honour proclaims the quite contrary; he passes for a phlegmatick fool, whose blood boils not at the first glimps of an affront; and 'tis gallantry to offer many injuries, but ignominious tameness to bear one. It has always been the indisputable prerogative of *kings* to be the *fountains of honour;* what an impious daring is it then to divest him of that privilege, *by whom kings reign?* to cancel his patents, and mark them out as the objects of scorn, to whom God gives so glorious a testimony? Yet thus is it daily done to the men whom the *King of kings will honour;* these are all the triumphs these *Mordecai's* must expect; an evidence how much worse they are than *Haman,* that allot them. Certainly there cannot be an act of greater defiance against the divine Majesty, than thus to reverse his decrees. And upon this hostility and opposition against Heaven it is, that all the *private quarrels* and combats on earth are (as on their foundation) superstructed; so that to initiate a duellist, his first *challenge* must be directed against God himself.

and such as are contrary to the rules and precepts of the Gospel.

14. Nor are these false measures of honour more opposite to religion, than prudence. The glosses the *swordmen* have put upon the one fundamental law of *not bearing an injury,* have introduced such a multitude of ridiculous punctilio's, that the next age will be in danger of receiving the fable of *Don Quixot* for authentick history. And I see not with what justice this can laugh at them in him and his squire *Sancho,* and yet think them serious enough to govern men in their most real and weighty concernments. It would indeed astonish any sober person to consider, what *Chimæra's* they are, to which men sacrifice all that ought to be dear to them. How many *Duels* have been fought, how many men kill'd (when neither of the combatants were so implacable, but that they could willingly have compounded the matter) only because they thought point of honour exacted it, and the declaring it would be inglorious? Certainly the gallies is a state of perfect liberty compared with this bondage. And were the release from those necessarily to infer a subjection to this, were those slaves obliged thus to become *Gentlemen,* I should cease my wonder, why so many of them have despised a manumission. For thus to have a man's estate, his life, yea, soul too at the mercy of popular breath (not only to be lost, but lost by his own act) is a slavery beyond all that the most abject creature ever groan'd under. And yet so prodigiously absurd is the world, as to cut this out for the *Benjamin's portion,* make it the especial and peculiar privilege of *Gentlemen.* They are set upon a theatre, and as the *gladiators* of old, must kill one another, only to entertain spectators. And who would not think *Bedlam* the only seminary to breed men up for such a trade? Yet so universal is this lunacy, that one may suspect the institution of that hospital is perverted, that *that* encloses only the sober persons, whilst the frantick run loose about the world.

and opposite to common prudence and ordinary discretion, as is particularly notorious in the case of Duels.

15. But perhaps the more malicious *Duellers* will think themselves exempt from this number, because 'tis their own satisfaction which they design in it: Their enemies blood will make so delicious a draught for their revenge, that they gasp after it, and think it a pleasure well worthy their pursuit. But sure these differ from the former, not as wise men from fools, but as a worse natur'd fool from a better. He that would justify the rationalness of any adventure, must prove the prize at least to equal the worth of that he hazards for it. But who that considers he has a soul, can seriously set it at so contemptible a rate? or what man in his wits that believes a Hell, will say, The pleasure of a revenge can countervail those pains? Nay, indeed, none can with any pretence put it in balance with the mere loss of life. For he that is kill'd (as every man may be that fights) can have no sense of that pleasure, and so becomes uncapable of the compensation,

The great sin and mischievous effects of fighting Duels,

 sation,

sation, if that were able to make it. Nay, I shall descend yet lower, and with some confidence affirm, that the uneasie consequences even of the victory do quite overwhelm the satisfaction. For this I dare refer my self to any of those who have had the unhappy triumph of a *murderer*; and doubt not, that if they will speak their experiences, they will tell us, that the cry of their adversaries blood in their conscience did utterly extinguish the relish of it in their fancy. Or if they were persons that were hardned against all sense of divine vengeance, yet the fear of humane was abundantly enough to defeat them of that pleasure they expected: So impossible is it to *gather grapes of* these *thorns*, to reap any contentment from so unchristian an attempt. Their revenge is not compleated without blood: And if they have it, it proves a torrent to carry away that imaginary delight they projected from it. And then what colour of reason can any man bring, why he should thus *sell his soul for nought*, and become a *Platonick* to damnation?

which gratifies only for the present a furious and revengeful Passion.

16. But *Revenge* has two ill match'd qualities, blindness and impetuosity; and so all its darts, though they carry force and venom enough to destroy all about them, yet by being ill aimed, revert mortally on the breast whence they were shot. Certainly there is not in the world a more prodigious infatuation, than that which rules in this affair. What can be more senseless than for me, when a man has done me an injury, to think to wipe off that, by exposing my self to more? When he has given me the lye, to invite him to give me the stab too? Did ever any man attempt to make up a breach by widening it? to close his wound by tearing it farther? The physicians indeed talk of a method of curing some diseases by *majoration*: But sure injuries are not in the number of those maladies, nor capable of that way of remedy. The greater may, 'tis possible, overwhelm, but not cure the less; as the more moderate pains become insensible by the superveniency of the more acute. Yet I presume none will applaud his choice, that should call for the rack to drown the pain of a cut finger, which yet is no hyperbolical emblem of this sort of Revenge.

There is a great deal of cowardice in the seeming courage and Gallantry of our duellists,

17. But besides all this, our *modern Gallantry* is treacherous to it self, confutes its own pretention; and whilst it vainly assumes the monopoly of courage, is indeed the meanest cowardise in the world. That by which we use to discriminate base fear from just caution, is the formidableness of the object feared. No man is reproached for not standing the inundation of the sea; but to quake at stepping over a gutter would be a ridiculous timorousness. 'Twould be neither wonder nor shame to run from the pursuit of a lion; but to be chased by a barking whelp is the property of an hare, not of a man. And according to this measure, what wretched cowards are our greatest *Hectors?* For what can be more contemptible, than those unjust scorns of men they so tremble at? which if they were sure to be universal, yet what real ill can they do a man, who does not by his own fancy lend them an edge wherewith to wound him? But neither can this be the case, till all both Christianity and sobriety be quite worn out of the world. For to a Christian, 'tis certain, the irreligion of fighting a duel would be the most infamous thing; and even to a sober Heathen the folly of it would be so too: So that he can be in no danger of either of their reproaches for declining it. And when these are set aside, who is there whose censure can be at all considerable? Yet this so pitiful, despicable thing is it, which so terrifies and amazes them. And how shall we define cowardise, if this be not it?

and no less the danger upon which they run themselves by their foolhardiness.

18. And as it has the nature, so has it the fate of it too; which usually is by fleeing an imaginary danger, to fall into a real. Men fight that they may not be thought cowards; and by fighting they do not only become indeed so, but also rush themselves upon other far more formidable mischiefs, run from a scare-crow into a *precipice*. And now what a riddle is this thing they call *gallantry*, which so startles at the weakest noise, yet stands undauntedly the stroke of a thunderbolt? They who so dread the reproach of vain impotent men, do yet confidently encounter the anger of the omnipotent God; and if valour and fool-hardiness were not very distant things, would confute my whole argument, by making it evident that they dare be damned. Thus by a strange kind of inverted operation their fear makes them bold: Would God that *Antiperistasis* might go on to work, till that boldness have again brought them to a fear, I mean that penitential fear, proper to those who thus deliberately provoke the Divine Majesty.

The sin of duelling receives a very great aggravation from the Deliberation wherewith oft-times it is accompanied:

19. And that very *Deliberation* is a circumstance of so great an enhansement, as unmeasurably heightens the sin. Sudden acts may be capable of some alleviations, by the surprize they make on a man's spirit: But contrived and premeditated crimes can have no milder appearance than of obstinate rebellion. And this aggravation can scarce ever be wanting to a *duel*; many hours, if not days intervening between the designment and the execution. And in that interval 'tis not possible for all the opiate receipts in Satan's dispensatory to keep the conscience so drowsy, that it shall not startle, but it will undoubtedly represent to a man the horror of that he is going about: Which is no less

than the engaging himself in a double murder, his own, and his adversary's. For the wilful hazard of both fastens on him the guilt, though both happen to survive the combat. But if it be his own fate to fall, (as he has much reason to expect, who thus puts himself out of God's protection, nay, dares his vengeance) what possible hope can remain for him who thus dies in that very act of the greatest sin? We are generally apt to think but uncomfortably of those who *make away* themselves: But certainly many of those deserve to be canonized in comparison with a man that dies in *duel*; the principle of that being often an excessive fear of God, which sure is less culpable than a profane contempt of him. Besides, the temptation in that case is usually more violent and impetuous; it being (if not begot, yet) cherished and fomented by melancholy, the most untractable and obstinate of all humours: Whereas the suggestion to this hath no such auxiliary to aid it, the original of quarrels being frequently from too free a jollity. And lastly, that of how heinous a kind soever, is yet but a single sin; whereas this as I said before, involves a twofold guilt. And of how crimson a colour must that soul appear before God's tribunal, that is thus double-dy'd in blood!

20. And now who can choose but cry out in the Prophet *Isaiah*'s style, *Hear, O Heavens, and hearken, O Earth?* What strain of wonder and amazement can bear proportion with the desperate madness of men, that can thus knowingly and consideringly rush themselves upon such unspeakable mischiefs? especially since here they want even that miserable reserve which serves to embolden them to other sins, *viz.* the hope of a future repentance. For those that make but the slightest measures of that, can scarce fancy any opportunities of it in this case: Since to him that dies, there seldom remains any space of interval between his sin and his death; no time for those clouds to gather, those penitential showers to descend, which should wash away his blood-guiltiness; or if there did, yet what expectation is there he should employ it to any effect? Such presumptuous considerate sins naturally work an obduration in the heart, which nothing but an extraordinary grace can remove; and after such an high and daring provocation, 'tis very reasonable to expect God should withdraw even the lowest degrees, but sure not that he should add higher.

And so doth the danger from that little time which they have to repent in, who are commonly cut off in the very act and moment they are guilty of this sin.

21. These considerations are all of them so obvious, that they naturally suggest themselves: And certainly they are so weighty and pressing, that 'tis a prodigy to see they should be so universally ineffectual: Which can proceed from nothing but the want of close and serious application. Would men dare but to meet single with their own sober thoughts, 'twould certainly supersede all other *duels*. There remains therefore nothing for me to add, but to invite them to this one encounter, to beseech them to grapple a while but with the force of reason, a combat of all others the securest, where to be subdued, is more glorious than to conquer in any other: And when it has dispoiled them of that false courage, which exposes them to such dismal ruins, to permit it to re-inspirit them with a true one, such as may give them daring enough to stand up against this so more than barbarous a Custom; to endeavour to banish it out of *Christendom*, and so take off that reproach which our profession lies under from so impious a practice; which having no other tenure but prescription, there needs nothing but desuetude to destroy. Let every man for his own part strictly abstain from it, and avow the doing so; and then by ceasing to be a fashion, it will cease to be at all.

'Tis heartily wish'd that this barbarous Custom were wholly forgot and laid aside.

22. But the misery of it is, no man will assume to be *leader* in this so noble an enterprize, to begin this so necessary a reformation: Which though it have so much more of compliance even to carnal interests, than its contrary, that I doubt not many wish it were universal; yet till it be so, they think 'twill be uncreditable to any particular person. But were that the certain event of it, 'tis sure that reproach ought to be despised, when it comes in competition with duty. In this case the resolution of *David* (as great a *swordman* as any of them) is most proper; *I will yet be more vile than thus*, 2 Sam. 6. 22. And certainly a man cannot pass a more glorious martyrdom, than to suffer ignominy upon such an account. I am sure 'tis a real shame to see, that men can offer violence to all their dearest complicated interests, to comply with that unchristian custom, yet cannot cross a single imaginary one to suppress it.

There are but a few that have the courage to begin and set the Example.

23. Nay, the truth is, they create punctilio's in this case, by which themselves will not be govern'd in any other. In a common *fire* does any man suspend his own endeavours, till he see the whole town running to quench the flame? Or if one of these popular persons had been of the *Philistines* company, *when the house began to fall*, Judg. 16. 30. would he have so dreaded the singularity of a solitary escape, as not to have attempted it, till shoals of others had led the way? We have had some experience under what prejudice a *publick act* falls, that is by its makers precluded from being a precedent. And sure these men do tacitly (yet very intelligibly) accuse the unreasonableness of this fear, whilst they confine it to this single instance. And methinks 'twere but just,

they ſhould be required to be conſentaneous to themſelves, and act in other things by the ſame meaſures; which would prove ſo ſharp a penance, as were more likely to reduce them to ſobriety, than all the force of argument.

Men ought to decline Duels out of Conſcience rather than Cowardiſe.

24. But beſides this ſevere remedy, there is ſure an *antidote* againſt this *malady*, a way to ſeparate the duty from the contempt which their fancies have ſo cloſely annex'd to it: And that is, by making their lives ſo uniformly Chriſtian, that it may be evident, 'tis conſcience, not fear that works with them. Without this, I know indeed no ſecurity from reproach. For to ſee a man, who tramples upon all other commands of God, catch up this as a buckler againſt a challenger; who can be ſo blindly charitable, as to impute this to any thing but cowardiſe? But when the whole tract of a man's life is one continued courſe of obedience, no man will expect he ſhould violate that upon this occaſion. To this may be added a chearful and free expoſing himſelf to all warrantable dangers, when any publick occaſion of hazard is offered: If he then ſhew himſelf daring, 'twill be apparent, that 'tis not the fear of death, but ſin which locks up his ſword from private *Duels*. Or when there is no opportunity of this active valour, let him approve his paſſive by a contented, nay, joyful ſubmiſſion to any ſuffering, that attends the diſcharge of a good Conſcience: And of this there is little fear (in theſe days eſpecially) to want occaſions. He that does this will be in no danger to be defamed for declining *duels*: But on the contrary, ſuch an equable piety will extort reverence from all; there being ſuch a venerable amability in it, that the moſt profane do even againſt their wills bear it ſome inward reſpect.

25. Let not men therefore pretend the *fear of reproach* as an excuſe, ſince here is ſo ready a *ſalvo* for that objection: But let them by an aſſiduous practice of all other Chriſtian virtues, render this alſo ſecure to them, and qualifie themſelves for the propagating it to others. And oh! that we could once ſee all other quarrels amongſt *Gentlemen* converted into this one holy contention, who ſhould be forwardeſt in this heroick attempt. 'Tis the falſe notion of honour that is one of Satan's principal citadels, like *Zion* to the *Jebuſites*: And the aſſaulting of that would be an atchievement of ſo much glory, that he that could proſper in it might juſtly challenge the dignity which *David* there promiſes, 2 *Sam*. 5. 8. of being *chief and captain*. Here then they may lawfully quench their thirſt of honour, yea, and that of revenge too, by wrecking their utmoſt malice on this their ſo grand enemy. Let it be remembred how long it hath befooled and cheated the world, and be expoſed to all the ſhames and deteſtation of a diſcovered impoſtor. Nay, let it be brought to a ſolemn arraignment; thoſe innumerable murders, of which it has been guilty, charg'd on it, and proſecuted to death, ſo utterly extinguiſhed, that it may never again appear in the world; whilſt all good men applaud the juſtice, and ſay, *So let thine enemies periſh, O Lord.*

A great pleaſure in being inſtrumental to draw men off from ſin, and bring them to Repentance.

26. Having thus reflected on the common *abuſes of Reputation*, all that remains is, to conſider how injurious men are to themſelves in their ill managery of this talent, which might be improved not only to their final account, but even their preſent pleaſure. For firſt, he that by ſeaſonable advice reſcues any man from a courſe of ſin, will infallibly feel ſo unutterable a complacency in having done ſo, that he will find he was kind to himſelf, as well as the other, and will have no temptation to think himſelf unprofitably employed, though that were to be his only reward. This bringing ſinners to repentance is ſo noble, ſo tempting a deſign, that it drew even God himſelf from Heaven to proſecute it; and that not by cheap and eaſie means, but by all thoſe ſufferings which humane nature moſt trembles at: Yet ſuch was *the joy* of man's ſalvation, which was *ſet before him*, as enabled him to *endure the croſs, and deſpiſe the ſhame*, Heb. 12. 2. How rich a bargain will it then be to a man to partake with him in that joy, to ſhare with him in that prize upon ſo much eaſier terms, to pay but a little breath for that which exhauſted his blood, and to become (in a lower inferior ſenſe) a ſaviour without a croſs?

The great happineſs of encouraging men to Virtue and Piety, by ſetting a good example.

27. In like manner, he that by a ſtrict and exemplary converſation ſets himſelf up a *land-mark* to direct men in this turbulent and dangerous *ſea*, his light 'tis true goes forth to others, but the warmth and cheriſhing heat of it remains within his own breaſt. What chearful, what exulting reflections may he make upon himſelf, that can make good St. *Paul*'s proteſtation, *Acts* 20. 26. that *he is pure from the blood of all men?* that he hath not by any ſcandalous example enſnared any ſoul; but on the contrary hath, by poſitive, illuſtrious acts of virtue endeavoured ſo to adorn his Chriſtian profeſſion, as to draw in proſelytes not to the name, but the obedience of Chriſt? that hath made it his buſineſs to ſtand in the gap, not only by his interceſſions with God againſt the plagues, but by his endeavours with men againſt the ſins of the nation; and by a ſteady oppoſing himſelf againſt the inundation of profaneneſs and licentiouſneſs, hath invited others to give ſome ſtop to thoſe impure torrents? It has always been accounted ſo glorious a thing to redeem one's country from ſlavery, that men have thought their greateſt hazards amply paid with the title of a patriot. But there is no vaſſalage ſo ignoble, no ſervitude ſo

miſerable

miserable, as that of vice; and consequently no attempt so worthy, so ingenious, so satisfactory to the undertaker, as to break that yoke. He that aspires to no more than a private innocence, is only on the defensive part, stands upon his guard against Satan: But he that aims at this sort of publick reformations, maintains an invasive war against him, and so more shakes his kingdom. The reducing of any sinner is the dispossessing him of so much of his usurpt territory, and weakens his empire in the world. This is indeed the true *publick spirit:* Which though many have pretended to, from whom we discern nothing of these effects; yet those very pretensions bear witness to the excellency of the thing, and ought to animate men to be indeed what so many have coveted to be thought.

There is much more satisfaction to live in peace and safety in the world, than to be always engag'd in fighting and quarrelling.

28. I suppose I need not go on to the other instance: Every man's sense without consulting either his reason or religion, will be able to pronounce, that 'tis better to be in peace than hostility, to have a whole than a wounded body, to keep securely his own station, than to be hunted like a *partridge on the mountains*, by the *avenger of blood*. The greater is the miracle, that men who in all other instances devote themselves wholly to their sensuality, should here only abjure it; that when body and soul come in competition, live as if they had no soul, yet upon this occasion can dare, as if they had no bodies. Oh that men should be such ill husbands of their sufferings, and thus enhance Satan's markets! Alas! *Hell* is a purchase will never be taken out of their hands; how many chapmen soever they see about it, they may secure their estate there firm enough by those sins they have more gust of: Why should they be thus madly prodigal to out-bid the common rate! Must *Gentlemen* buy damnation as they usually do wares, dearer than other men? How is perdition become so amiable, that like *Rachel a double servitude* is judged light for it; whilst Heaven in the mean time like *Leah*, *is so* much *despised*, that 'tis thought an injury to have that obtruded on them, tho' upon the easiest terms? Certainly they are strange transforming *opticks*, which these men make use of. Would God they could be but persuaded if not to break, yet at least for a while to lay by those *false glasses*, and behold things in their genuine and proper shapes: And then, I doubt not, they will discern that honour to be infamy, which sets men at defiance with God; and that Reputation then alone becomes estimable, when like a river it pays its tribute to the ocean, promotes his glory, at whose feet kings (without diminution) cast both themselves and crowns.

SECT. IX.

The CONCLUSION.

The Conclusion of the whole, containing an enforcement of all the foregoing particulars.

1. WE have now according to our proposed method surveyed distinctly those several *advantages* which *Gentlemen* enjoy; and may surely give the same testimony which *Caleb* and *Joshua* did of *Canaan*, Numb. 14. *The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.* 'Tis a rich and fertile soil, wherein these men are planted, such as hath a natural aptitude and vigour to produce the most excellent fruits. But *Paradise* it self required dressing, and therefore we find *Adam* had that work assigned him in his innocence. And surely these his sons may well submit to the same task; by the faithful discharge whereof they may make some approaches towards that his pristine state.

2. It need not be again inculcated, that all these their receipts have their special and particular ends in God's assignment. 'Twill be more useful to remember them, how nearly they are concern'd not to pervert the counsel of God against themselves, by neglecting to give them their due expected improvements. For though he be a most liberal, yet is he not a negligent Master, but keeps an exact and punctual account of whatever he thus delivers out, and will not fail severely to avenge the embezling of his goods. Indeed such an abuse has so fatal an efficacy, that it quite changes their nature, converts them from blessings to the heaviest curses: Would God too many men had not thus exemplified their own destructive power, and by a kind of *anti-creation* brought darkness out of light.

3. But 'tis pity they should be permitted to sleep in that darkness which themselves have made. And therefore if this *little Tract* shall fall into any such hands, it must avow to come upon that uncivil yet friendly errand, to disturb their rest, to awake them to some consideration; and as *Philip*'s monitor was to *remember him*, *that he was but a man*; so to put them in mind, that in the midst of their freest enjoyments they are still but *stewards*, and know not how soon their Lord may summon them to their accounts. And with what confusion and consternation must they appear at the great *audit*, who have so unfaithfully managed their trust? 'Tis therefore now no longer time to dally, but by an assiduous care and diligence to endeavour to redeem their past ill-husbandry, lest they

run

run the fate of that *evil servant*, mention'd *Matth.* 24. be surprized in the midst of their inordinacies, and have their *portion* assigned them in *weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

4. And now what objection can they possibly make against this so necessary a caution, which is founded upon such motives, as should methinks infallibly prevail upon all sorts of tempers? If they have any sense of fear, here are those *terrors of the Lord*, which are amazing enough to set even a *Belshazzar* (though with a cup at his mouth, his concubines by his side) *a trembling.* Certainly he must not be only frozen, but petrified in desperate impiety, whom even a glimpse of those eternal flames will not be able to dissolve.

5. *But* if *fear* (though of God) be too degenerous a passion for a *Gentleman* to own, this advice can upon as good grounds address it self to their *hope:* There is as well the *joy of the Lord* for the *faithful*, as the *outer darkness* for the *unprofitable servant.* For though God have right of absolute dominion, and might exact obedience on his bare command; yet he is more pleased to shew himself a benefactor than a Lord; and therefore descends to treat with men by the more gentle and inviting methods of promises and rewards. Nay, indeed the end of his commands is only to make us capable subjects of those eternal felicities he desires to bestow. And this surely is enough to excite men to a diligent negotiating with those talents they have received, since it is indeed themselves they are trading for. The stock, it is true, is God's; but all the encrease of it will by his bounty certainly devolve on them. And therefore as *Naaman's* servants thought the cure he was in a pursuit of, deserved a submission to the severest prescriptions; *If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?* 2 Kings 5. 3. so surely we may conclude, those endless joys proposed by God are cheaply earned even by the most exhausting labours, the most vigorous tasks.

6. But such is the tenderness and indulgence of our gracious Master, so earnest his desire of his dispensing his rewards, that he will not trust mens sloth and folly with such a pretence of defeating themselves; and therefore hath annexed no such condition. We have seen through all the several parts of duty, which constitute the *Gentleman's Calling*, that they are of a quite distant frame, not toils but refreshments, not yokes but crowns, such as differ only in size from those celestial ones to which they tend; so that here is bait even to the greatest voluptuary. And who that observes how many such there be, would expect this *fruit of paradise* should still hang untouch'd? Yet such a preposterous temperance have they put on, that they are proof against all these allurements. Good God! what contradictions are men made up of! It is the business of their lives to pursue pleasures; and yet when those of the most refined and exquisite sort would run into their embraces, they grow coy, and cannot be courted to receive them. We daily see the devil hath his *martyrs*: It seems he hath his *asceticks* too. And so witty is the world grown in creating sins, that they have found out a *sin of self-denial.* Would God these absur'd mortifiers might be persuaded to remit somewhat of their severity. The most rigid *orders* in religion have still indulged some relaxation, some times of festivity: Why should Satan's votaries be so much more zealous than God's, as to make their abstinences so perpetual?

7. It speaks indeed the cruelty of that master they serve; but so it does his *policy* also. He well knows, that if these divine lights should but insinuate themselves, they would soon undermine his whole foundation; so ravishing and attractive are they, that nothing but a perfect ignorance of them can be amulet sufficient against their charms. And therefore it is his necessary concern to keep men from ever tasting of them, the least relish whereof would be sure to make them despise all his adulterated delicacies. So we see he can give some rational account of his part of the matter. But what can men say for themselves, who play his game for him, even when their own souls are at the stake; that at once renounce that eternal interest and present pleasure? This is indeed in *David's phrase*, 2 Sam. 3. 33. *to die as a fool dieth.* Their hands are not bound, nor their feet put into fetters; no extrinsick hindrance lies on them, why they may not *stretch forth their hand to* this *tree of life, and eat and live* happily here, and gloriously *for ever:* And yet, like *Solomon's sluggard, they hide their hands in their bosom, and will not so much as bring them to their mouths*, Prov. 19. 24.

8. This is so stupid a folly, as none that pretends to common sense would in any worldly concernment be guilty of. Will any man renounce a rich unchargeable reversion, when he is not only wooed, but bribed by a considerable sum in hand not to disclaim it? I fear there are few so *mortified to wealth*, as to do it upon the score of self-denial; and sure no man would be thought in his wits that should do it upon any other. For what jealousies soever he had entertained of the security, or value of that future estate, yet the present visible profit would deserve his consideration. There is but one circumstance imaginable that could reasonably avert him, and that is the suspicion of *deceit*, that the coin

which is offered him is false and adulterate. And that I may not be under a necessity of pronouncing so many men mad, I shall suppose it not unlikely that this scruple may occur to them in the present case. They have so long brought all their *bullion* to Satan's mint, suffered him to stamp their pleasures, that none will now pass for current with them which has not his impress: And upon this account 'tis too probable they may distrust the validity of the present payment, disbelieve the pleasantness of those *duties* I have here recommended to their enjoyment, as well as practice. Nor shall I desire to impose on their belief, but shall very willingly wave their faith, and appeal to their *sense*. But then they must remember, that that is uncapable of judging by any other means but *experience:* And therefore, if all that has been address'd to their *reason* be ineffectual, that remains as the last reserve for their convincement. Let every one of them seriously and conscientiously set to the *practice*, (and allow only for so much of difficulty, as naturally attends the interrupting a contrary custom) and then let him, if he can, doubt of the pleasure. Let him allow himself but this one *medium* to infer it, and I shall defie his dissent to the *Conclusion*. Let him *sow* with me this handful of seed *in the tears* of true contrition, for remembring his duty and interest so late, and I shall rest confident *he will reap in joy* in this world, and carry the news of it to another, even thither also *bring his sheaves with him*, *abundance of fruit to his account*, be bless'd here, and crown'd eternally.

PRIVATE DEVOTIONS.

A CONFESSION.

O BLESSED Lord, I thy wretched creature, thy not only unprofitable and slothful, but wicked servant, do here prostrate my self at thy feet, humbly acknowledging that I have most perversly and most treacherously misemployed those many precious talents wherewith thou hast entrusted me. I have, O Lord, unworthily abused those common mercies which thou hast afforded me as a man, and a Christian, my whole life having been a continued resistance to the dictates both of reason and religion. But I have yet further perverted those more special liberalities of thine, whereby thou hast assayed to vanquish and melt an ungrateful heart. My knowledge hath had no influence on my choices, but I have obstinately pursued those ways, which I knew led to the chambers of death, and by advancing my sins from ignorances to presumptions, hath served only to render me liable to the greater number of stripes. That wealth whereby I should have glorified thee, and succoured my brethren, I have converted into fuel to maintain and accend my covetousness, pride and luxury, so levying war against thee with thine own treasure. Thus unfaithful, O Lord, have I been in the unrighteous mammon; and who then shall commit to my trust the true riches? I have wasted that time thou hast given me to work out my own salvation, vainly and impertinently; nay, often so viciously and impiously, that idleness, tho' a crying sin of *Sodom*, hath been the silentest of my guilts, the greater portion of my days having been devoted either to the pursuit or enjoyment of my brutish pleasures, so making it my business to provide for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; and of those many days and years thou hast afforded me, how few minutes are there of which I can give any tolerable account to thee, or my own soul? Nay, O Lord, as if my single and personal impieties had been too little, I have propagated them to others, and have made that authority and esteem, which thou gavest me for better purposes, the means of ensnaring all whom my interest or example could seduce. And now, O Lord, how unknown, astonishing a weight of guilt do I lie under, that am to answer for so many sins of other men, as well as my self, that have thus been a snare on *Mizpah*, and a net spread on mount *Tabor*, the instrument of intangling and betraying so many souls! O merciful Lord, who delightest not in the death of a sinner, look with pity both on them and me, give me a sincere and earnest repentance for my own offences; and if it be thy blessed will, make me some way instrumental to the begetting the like in them, that I may be as contributive to their recovery, as I have been to their fall: And let the consciousness of my great sloth, and unfaithfulness in all the parts of my stewardship, excite me to a more diligent and industrious improvement of all those advantages thou hast put into my hands, for thy glory, the benefit of my brethren, and the eternal joy of my own soul. Grant this, O gracious Lord, for his sake who came to call sinners to repentance, Jesus Christ our Lord.

A THANKSGIVING.

O Most gracious and most bountiful Lord, who dost good unto all, but hast in an extraordinary measure abounded to me thy unworthiest servant; I desire with all exuberant thankfulness of heart to confess and celebrate this thy great goodness. Lord, thou hast not been

been to me a wilderneſs, a land of darkneſs, but haſt cauſed my lot to fall in a fair ground. Thou haſt not only given me a natural, and a capacity of a ſpiritual life, but haſt alſo enriched me with many advantages for the comfortable ſupport of the one, and the happy improvement of the other, above what thou affordeſt to multitudes of others. Thou haſt liberally given me of the dew of Heaven, and fatneſs of the Earth, and aſſurance of all thoſe good things which may both oblige and aſſiſt me chearfully to ſerve thee. O let not my heart, like *Gideon*'s fleece, remain dry, whilſt all about it is thus plentifully watered from Heaven; but give me, I beſeech thee, ſuch a ſenſe of thy mercy, as may expreſs it ſelf in a conſtant and zealous obedience. Thou haſt done ſo much for this meaneſt plant in thy vineyard, dreſs'd it and fenc'd it about with thy grace and providence; and having built a wine-preſs, mayſt moſt reaſonably expect ſome cluſters to be brought to it at the vintage. O let not ſo gracious, ſo equitable a demand be fruſtrated, when thou lookeſt it ſhould bring forth grapes, let it not bring forth wild grapes; let not thoſe advantages I enjoy above others tempt me to exalt my ſelf, or deſpiſe them, but grant me always to remember, that it is thou only that makeſt me differ from another. Lord, let thy methods be my documents; thy diſpenſations of indulgence towards me, the engagements and bands of the cloſeſt and moſt inviolable duty; that that eminency of condition wherein thou haſt placed me in this world, may be an effectual admonition to me to be eminent in virtue; that men ſeeing my good works, may glorifie thee my heavenly Father, thro' Jeſus Chriſt our Lord and bleſſed Saviour. *Amen.*

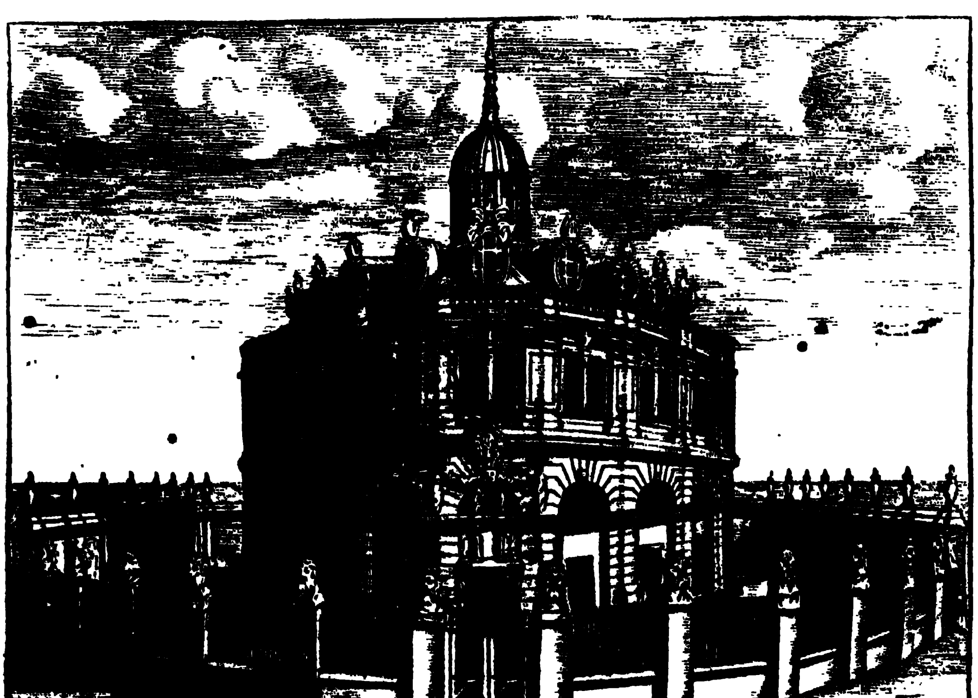
A PRAYER.

O THOU moſt righteous and impartial Judge, who deſpiſeſt not the mean, nor accepteſt the perſons of the mighty, make me always to remember, and ſeriouſly to conſider, that none of thoſe outward privileges I enjoy among men can exempt me from thy ſevere tribunal, but that I ſhall one day be brought to judgment, as for all that I have done in the fleſh, ſo particularly for thoſe ſpecial and peculiar advantages whereby thou haſt diſcriminated me from my meaner brethren: And oh! let theſe terrors of the Lord timely perſuade, yea, conſtrain me to a chearful employing of all I have received, to thoſe ends for which thou haſt beſtowed them. Lord, grant that the knowledge thou haſt given me may have ſuch an efficacy on my practice, that it may always guide, never upbraid me. And as thou haſt opened thy hand wide to me in temporal plenty, ſo enlarge my heart in thankfulneſs toward thee, and in compaſſion and bounty toward thy poor members. I am not ſtraitned by thee, O let me not be ſtraitned in my own bowels; let neither covetouſneſs nor riot make me poor in the midſt of riches, but grant me that true enjoyment which conſiſts in a charitable diſpenſing of them; that forſaking all the unſatisfying, nauſeated pleaſures of luxury, I may purchaſe to my ſelf that more ſolid tranſcending delight of ſuccouring the diſtreſſes of my fellow Chriſtians. Lord, ſuffer not my wealth to be only a lading with thick clay, nor the ruſt of it to bear witneſs againſt me; but rather make me of the number of thoſe that need relief, than of thoſe who want hearts to give it. And ſince in thy gracious providence thou haſt placed me in a condition of eaſe and vacancy, O let me not pervert it into a life of idleneſs and ſenſuality; let me not be leſs, but better buſied than other men. O never ſuffer me to incur the guilt of reproach; of being more remiſs or indifferent in my intercourſe with thee, than others are of their traffick with the world; of having leſs care of my own and other mens immortal ſouls, than they have of their corruptible bodies; but make me ſo induſtriouſly to huſband every minute of that precious time thou lendeſt me here, as may be in order to a bleſſed eternity both of my ſelf, and as many more as thou ſhalt put within my reach. O let not any perſons ever have cauſe to accuſe their relation to me, for betraying them to ſin here, or miſery hereafter; but grant that all that are under my care or power, may receive ſuch wholſome influence from me, as may nouriſh all Chriſtian practice among them. And, Lord, grant that my example may be ſuch to all, that I never prove to any an occaſion of falling: Let me never contribute to that power and empire which vice has gotten in the world, but with a ſteady courage oppoſe all impiety, how cuſtomary or ſucceſsful ſoever: Let me think nothing honourable, but what bears thy ſtamp and impreſs on it; but engage, and animate, and inflame my benumb'd breaſt to the moſt eager and vigorous endeavour of recovering diſcountenanc'd virtue to ſome eſteem and reputation among men. And, O Lord, grant that by an aſſiduous practice of all duty, I may arrive to ſuch a guſt and reliſh of it, as may utterly ſupplant any ſenſual delights in my own heart, and may alſo qualify me experimentally to aſſure others how ſweet the Lord is; that I may be an effectual (tho' unworthy) inſtrument in thy hand, of drawing many to the obedience of Chriſt; and that renouncing all the vain torturing ambitions of this world, I may aſpire to no other honour, but that of being approved by thee as a good and faithful ſervant; that by thy mercy having my infirmities covered, and my ſincerity accepted, I may at laſt be admitted into the joy of my Lord, thro' the merits of Jeſus Chriſt my bleſſed Saviour and Mediator. *Amen.*

B

FINIS.

The Second Part
OF THE
WORKS
OF THE
LEARNED AND PIOUS
AUTHOR
OF
The Whole Duty of Man.



OXFORD,
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THE

LADIES CALLING.

IN TWO PARTS.

THE PREFACE.

The Author's design in the ensuing Treatise.

THOUGH *the smalness of this Tract will scarce justify the solemnity of a Preface; yet remembring 'tis design'd for those who are accustomed to Ceremonious Addresses, I think it not best to approach them too abruptly. And indeed besides the Civility, there seems some use of it in order to my design. To advise, or reprove, is so ungrateful an office, that he that undertakes it, had need use all previous arts to vindicate the sincerity of his purpose, and to convince the person admonished, that 'tis neither spleen nor prejudice, but the most real exuberant kindness which prompts him to inflict those* wounds of a friend, *Prov.* 27. 6. *and that he is never less* an enemy, than when he thus tells them the truth, *Gal.* 4. 16. *Therefore though they may in the ensuing leaves meet with some things which may have a shew of severity, yet let me assure my Reader, they have indeed a design of the greatest service, by correcting the extravagance of some, to rescue the whole Sex, as from the contagion of the example, so from the community of the blame. For such is either the inadvertence, or malice of a great part of mankind, that (against all rules of Discourse) they deduce generals from particulars, make every woman so far an* Eve, *that her depravation shall forfeit her whole kind; and because there are foolish and scandalous women, will scarce allow there are any other.*

The contempt which men have entertain'd of the female Sex, comes from their unworthy ends upon them.

The truth is, the Error seems in many Men to be affected; they propose to themselves unworthy ends on Women, and make all their observations wholly in order to those. He that is upon a bad pursuit, takes particular notice of all that he thinks for his turn; the rest fall not within his sphere: and 'tis too probable he is so abundantly supplied for that absolute consideration, that he never descends to the comparative. Nay, perhaps there may be yet a deeper Original of the scandal: the World is much governed by estimation: and as Applause encourages and exalts, so an universal Contempt debases and dejects the Spirit. If it can pass once into a Maxim, that Women are such silly or vicious Creatures, it may put fair for the making them so indeed. Themselves may imbibe the common Opinion, charge all their Personal Faults on their Sex, think that they do but their kind, when indeed they most contradict it, and no more aspire to any thing worthy, than a man can pretend to the Excellencies of an Angel. And indeed this seems to be the practical inference of some Women, who could hardly have descended to such Dishonours, had they not before been as vile in their own Eyes, as they have afterwards rendred themselves in others.

'Twill be a charitable service to the female Sex, to acquaint them with their own value.

It may therefore upon this account be a necessary Charity to the Sex, to acquaint them with their own Value, animate them to some higher thought of themselves; not to yield their Suffrage to those injurious Estimates the World hath made of them, and from a supposed Inca-

pacity of Nobler things, to neglect the pursuit of them; from which God and Nature have no more precluded the Feminine, than the Masculine part of Mankind.

They have a powerful influence on all publick transactions.

In reference to Secular Considerations, their advantages are most important; Women have a very powerful influence upon all sort of Transactions in the World: the engaging of Delilah, *and* plowing with the heifer, *Judg.* 14, *and* 16. *being ever the surest way to undermine the Councels, and master the Force of the stoutest* Samson. *And accordingly Histories of all kinds assure us that the* Gynæceum *had still had a Rival Suffrage with the Senate. I might urge the more regular Powers which appertain unto that Sex: that all mankind is the Pupil and Disciple of Female Institution: the Daughters till they write Women, and the Sons till the first seven years be past; the time when the mind is most ductile, and prepar'd to receive impression, being wholly in the Care and Conduct of the Mother. And whereas 'tis observ'd by* Aristotle *in his Politicks, (and is a proof of his being as Wise, as he was Learned a Man) that the Estate of Republicks entirely hangs on private Families, the little Monarchies both composing and giving Law unto the great; 'tis evident that the disposal of Families and all domestick Concerns therein lies chiefly on the Wife; whence the same* Aristotle *declares, that the* Spartans *notwithstanding their ready address to Empire by their great Frugality, Industry, and Military Vertue, could have but half a Happiness, as failing on the part of their Wives. But waving these reflections, I shall fix only to the Personal Accomplishments of the Sex, and peculiarly that which is the most principal Endowment of the Rational Nature, I mean their Understanding. Where first it will be a little hard to pronounce, that they are naturally inferiour to Men; when 'tis consider'd how much of extrinsick weight is put in the ballance to turn it on the Mens side. Men have their parts cultivated and improved by Education, refined and subtilized by Learning and Arts, are like an inclosed piece of a Common, which by Industry and Husbandry becomes a different thing from the rest, though the natural Turf own'd no such inequality. And truly had Women the same Advantage, I dare not say but they would make as good returns of it; some of those few that have been tried, have been eminent in several parts of Learning. To omit the modern instances,* Theano *after the death of* Pythagorus *kept up his School;* Socrates *confesses himself to have been instructed not only in Rhetorick by* Aspatia, *but even in the highest Points of Philosophy by* Diotime. *The Roman Story informs us of the deep wisdom of* Tanaquil, Cornelia, Livia, *to pass by others. And were we sure they would have ballast to their sails, have humility enough to poise them against the vanity of Learning, I see not why they might no more frequently be entrusted with it; for if they could be secur'd against this weed, doubtless the soil is rich enough to bear a good crop.*

If they have disadvantage in reference to their intellectuals, in respect of men, their souls are equal, and alike capable of grace and glory.

But not to oppose a receiv'd opinion, let it be admitted, that in respect of their intellects they are below men; yet sure in the sublimest part of humanity, they are their equals: they have Souls of as divine an Original, as endless of Duration, and as capable of infinite Beatitude. That spiritual Essence, that ray of Divinity owns no distinction of Sexes; so that in this sense also, that Aphorism of the Apostle holds good, there is neither Male nor Female, but all are one, *Gal.* 3. 28. *And sure there is the one transcendent Excellency of Human Nature. For alas, what value can comparatively be set upon all other Qualifications, which will finally leave us but like the Beasts that perish. And this, as it is the highest pitch of their worth, so it is the safest subject of their Contemplation: other knowledge, as the Apostle speaks,* 1 *Cor.* 8. 1. may puff up, *this only will* edify.

And here Ladies should place their value of themselves.

As therefore when we would pride our selves, we use not to boast our meaner, but our best qualities: so let me solicite Ladies to be so just to themselves, as not to take their own measures by any thing below this. Why should they take so low a level of Greatness, as to value themselves upon a title which is but a bigger blast of air, when they may derive their descent from above the Stars, claim cognation with Divinity? Why should they dote on the fictitious image of a perhaps more fictitious beauty, which their glass presents them, when they need but look inward to see an infinitely fairer Idea, an emanation of the eternal Brightness? Indeed did they make a just estimate of themselves in this respect, it would overwhelm the vanity of those inferiour things wherein they now have such complacency, nor would they suffer their nobler part to be affronted by the unequal competition of their meaner.

Such a value would produce solicitude and vigilance, to preserve what we prize.

But there is also another consequent which would flow from that esteem; they would sollicitously preserve what they so highly prize, it being natural for us to proportion our care to our value. They would be jealously vigilant against every thing, that might eclipse the radiancy or contaminate the purity of their souls. 'Twas the advice of a Heathen moralist, Revere thy self; *and 'twas very wholsome counsel: for next our due veneration to God, a reverence to our selves is the most severe controler of all exorbitancies. How can a soul that remembers its celestial extraction, wallow it self in the mire, stoop to any sordid degenerous practices? 'Tis said of* Themistocles, *that seeing once a rich booty about the dead corpses of his enemies, he touch'd it not, but pointing to another, said, Take thou that, for thou art*

not

not Themistocles. *If then a little military fame could so elevate his thoughts, 'tis a shame that any who carry an immortal spirit about them, should not be raised above all the contemptible baits of this sublunary world. Why should they not with the like disdain turn over all sensual inordinances to meer Animals, and creatures that have no higher principle than that of sense, whilst themselves soar up to the more sublimated* pleasures, which are at God's right Hand for evermore, *Psal.* 16. 12.

We may therefore conclude, that whatever vicious impotence Women are under, it is acquired, not natural; nor derived from any illiberality of Gods, but from the ill managery of his Bounty. He has placed within them a Pillar of Cloud and Fire, sufficient to shelter and conduct them through all the storms, all the intricacies that can occur in their journey to Canaan; *if they will forget that more intrinsick part of their Being, live as if they were all body, reject the Manna, and rave after the Quails; that destruction which will thereby be induced, they must own to spring from themselves. Let them not charge God foolishly, or think that by making them women, he necessitated them to be proud, or wanton, vain or peevish; since 'tis manifest he made them to better purposes, was not partial to the other Sex, but that having as the Prophet speaks,* abundance of spirit, *Mal.* 2. *he equally dispenc'd it, and gave the feeblest woman as large and capacious a Soul as that of the Greatest Heroe.*

Whatever vicious impotence Women are under, it is acquir'd, not natural.

Nay give me leave to say farther, that as to an Eternal well being, he seems to have placed them in more advantageous circumstances than he has done men. He has planted in them some native propensions, which (as I shall hereafter have occasion to observe) do much facilitate the operations of grace upon them. Besides, there are many temptations to which men are expos'd, that are out of their road. How hard is it for a man to converse in the world, but he shall be importun'd to debauchery and excess, must forfeit his sobriety to maintain the reputation of a sociable Person? Again, how liable are they by a promiscuous conversation among variety of humors, to meet with affronts, which the Maxims of Honour will tell them must (in spight of all Christ's interdicts) be reveng'd? And this engages them in Quarrels, sometimes in Murders. Now none of these are incident to women: they must in these and some other instances attack temptation, violently ravish guilt, and abandon their Sex, the whole Oeconomy of their estate, e'er they can divest themselves of their innocency. So that God seems in many particulars to have closelier fenced them in, and not left them to those wilder excursions, for which the customary liberties of the other Sex afford a more open way. In short, they have so many advantages towards Vertue, that though the Philosopher made it one of his solemn acknowledgments to God, that he had made him a man, not a woman: yet I think Christian women have now reason enough to invert that form, and to thank God that made them women, and not men.

As to eternal interests Women seem placed in the most advantageous circumstances.

But we know advantages which are only in speculation, are look'd on with some diffidence, till there have been some practical experiment made of them; I shall therefore evidence the problem by demonstration and instance; desiring my Readers to measure the possibilities of their arriving to eminent degrees of Vertue and Piety, by what others have attained to. I shall not fetch examples of Morality from heathen women, because I am now upon an higher strain; (yet many such might be brought to the reproach of many Women, who pretending to more; fall infinitely short of that:) 'tis Christian Vertue that I am now recommending, and which has been eminently exemplified in many of their Sex. How many Women do we read of in the Gospel, who in all the duties of assiduous attendance on Christ, liberalities of love and respect, nay even in zeal and courage, surpassed even the Apostles themselves? We find his Cross surrounded, his Passion celebrated by the avowed tears and lamentations of devout women, when the most sanguine of his Disciples had denied, yea forswore, and all had forsaken him. Nay, even Death it self could not extinguish their love; we find the devout Maries *designing a laborious, chargeable, and perhaps hazardous respect to his Corps. And accordingly, 'tis a memorable attestation Christ gives to their Piety, by making them the first witnesses of his Resurrection, the prime Evangelists to proclaim those great Tidings; and as a Learned Man speaks, Apostles to the Apostles. Nor is the devotion of that Sex to be found only in the sacred Records; the Primitive times have left us many Memorials of the like, and the Martyrologes are full of Female sufferers of all ages and conditions, who by the fervor of their Zeal had overcome the timorousness of their Nature, and wearied the cruelty of their Persecutors. And as Women help'd to augment the number of Martyrs, so did they of Confessors also, in a stout owning, and diligent practice of Christianity. Queens and Empresses knew no Title so Glorious as that of a nursing Mother to the Church, have often exchanged their Palaces for little Cells and Oratories, and valued not their own Diadems in comparison with their Saviours Crown of Thorns. And though by a perpetual declination from that pristine Zeal, the instances have in every age grown less numerous, yet none has wanted some very illustrious Examples. Nay even in our dregs of time, in this common decay of all good, there are, I doubt not, many who (according to their opportunities) transcribe*

Examples of eminent vertue and piety in Women.

 the

the former Copies, live like People that know they must live hereafter, and present us yet with some specimen of ancient Vertue. Nay to speak an impartial Truth, 'tis not to be denied, but the reputation of Religion is more kept up by women than men, many of the one countenancing it by their Practice, whereas more of the other do not only neglect but decry it. And now since Women are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, who by doing the thing give the surest evidence that 'tis not unfeasible, why should any plead an impossibility? In matters of Vanity and Pomp they are not so easily disheartned, no pattern of that kind can be set, which will not be industriously imitated; nay in the greatest inequality of materials for it. Why then should their emulation leave them, where only it could do them good? How comes it, that of those who have equal Principles of a spiritual Being, some live according to the Dignity of it; and others who see them do so, do yet live as if they assented to that Philosophers Paradox, who said Women had no souls; or at least were of the Pythagorean Sect, and look'd upon themselves only as the Jails and Prisons of former offending Spirits, which they resolv'd to fit for a yet viler transmigration; give them the appetites of Beasts before they assume the Bodies. This is indeed an unlucky Humility, that those who in all other instances are apt to overween, should here sink so much below themselves. And I hope 'twill not appear an uncivil address, to perswade them to a juster estimate of their own worth. And if what has been said to that end may have any effect. I shall not desire a better Preparation to the ensuing Tract; since she that duly considers her own capacity of Eternal Bliss, and withal, the possibility of as endless a Misery, according as she performs or neglects the several Parts of Duty, will sure need no other incentive to the diligent Pursuit of it.

THE CONTENTS.

PART I.

PART II.

THE

THE Ladies Calling.

PART I. SECT. I.

Of Modesty.

1. IT is now many Years since an Addresſs was made to the Gentry of this Nation, to perſwade them to that Vertue which would be both their pleaſure and reward. I cannot, I confeſs, boaſt any ſuch effect of that, as ſhould much inſpirit the hopes of a new Attempt; yet ſince we ſee in our proper ſecular concerns, defeats do many times animate no leſs than ſucceſs, I know not why in this more charitable deſign I ſhould ſit down diſcouraged. Men uſually raiſe not a ſiege upon the firſt repulſe, but reinforce their batteries, obſerve more curiouſly which are the moſt aſſailable, acceſſible parts, and accordingly diſpoſe their aſſault: it will then be no unreaſonable imitation in the preſent caſe, if after a ſucceſleſs attempt upon the more impregnable, Maſculine part of the Gentry, I now aſſay the Feminine, whoſe native ſoftneſs and gentleneſs may render them leſs apt for that reſiſtance of good Counſel, wherein too many men place their gallantry.

The writing of the Gentlemans calling, do's not ſuperſede an addreſs to the other Sex.

2. I preſume thoſe to whom that little tract was firſt deſign'd, will be ſo willing to relinquiſh their title, that I might without imputation of robbery exchange my patrons, and by a new dedication ſuperſede the labour of a new book. And indeed, ſince what was there ſaid was founded more on the diſtinction of Qualities than of Sex, there would not need many razures to render it as proper for one as the other; and I ſhall take ſo much advantage of it, as to aſſure the Female Gentry, that they may there find much of the Duty incumbent on them, in reſpect of that rank and condition they hold in the World: and therefore, though I ſhall ſometimes make ſome reflections on it, yet as to the main, I ſhall think it the eaſieſt courſe, as well for them as my ſelf, to direct them thither.

Many duties are common to both.

3. But it may ſeem to have too much of the Pedant, to entertain new ſcholars only with the caſt or nauſeated learning of the old; and when I remember I write to Ladies, who uſe to think the newneſs of any thing a conſiderable Addition to it's value, I conceive my ſelf oblig'd as well in civility to their humour, as charity to their needs, to give them ſomething which they may own as their Peculiar. And to render it the more unalienable, I ſhall affix it to their Sex; and make it the ſubject of my preſent inquiſition, what in reſpect of that are the proper and diſtinct obligations, under which, by the aſſignment of God and Nature they are plac'd.

The peculiar to the latter, are here intended to be treated of.

4. That the obligation to moral and chriſtian Vertues is in it ſelf univerſal, and not confin'd to any Sex or Perſon, is not to be denied; yet, as in humane Conſtitutions there are often precepts, which (tho' not excluſive of any, do yet) more peculiarly and eminently level at ſome particular rank or order of Men; ſo in the laws of God and Nature, there appears the like diſtinction. That All-wiſe Creator, who hath put peculiar proprieties and inclinations into his creatures, hath accordingly deſign'd their actuating and improving them: and altho' in mankind, which differs not in ſpecies but in gender, the variety may ſeem leſs; yet there is ſtill enough to found ſome diverſity, either in the kind or degree of Duty. This ſure is ſhadow'd to us in that particular caution given to the Jews, not to confound the habit of the ſeveral Sexes, *Deut.* 22. 5. and yet more clearly evinc'd in the precept which the Apoſtles addreſs to Women, 1 *Tim.* 2. 9. and 1 *Pet.* 3. 3. Nay, this is ſo granted a Truth, that all ages and nations have made diſtinction between maſculine and feminine Vertues, Nature having not only given a diſtinction as to the

Such vertues, as with ſome propriety may be ſtiled feminine

the beauties of their outward form, but alſo in their very mould and conſtitution implanted peculiar aptneſſes and proprieties of mind, which accordingly vary the meaſure of decency; that being comely for the one Sex, which often is not (at leaſt in the ſame degree) for the other. It will therefore be no abſurd attempt, to decipher thoſe Excellencies, which are the genuine and proper ornaments of Women: which tho' in ſome inſtances they may perhaps prove coincident with thoſe of Men; yet even thoſe which are equally incluſive of both, by the Divine command may have ſome additional weight on the Female ſide, in reſpect of Decency, Fame, or ſome other (not deſpicable) conſideration.

Of these, ſome vertues belong to all; others have a reſpect to ſeveral ſtates of life.

5. For the better directing our preſent Inquiſition, it will be moſt regular, firſt to enquire what thoſe vertues are, which are univerſally neceſſary to Women, in all ages and circumſtances of their lives: ſuch, which like the firſt matter, are pre-requir'd for all forms; which like a firm and ſolid baſis, muſt ſupport all various events, all changes of their condition or relations. And ſecondly, we ſhall conſider them in thoſe changes; track them through the ſeveral ſtages and periods of Life, through thoſe ſeveral ſtates which create the moſt conſiderable mutations to them; and in each of thoſe, conſider what are the new and proportionate acceſſions of Duty.

Some alſo are of greater, others of leſs importance.

6. As in the outward accommodations of life, the things of moſt daily and indiſpenſible uſe, deſerve the greateſt value; ſo in Moral or Divine Endowments, the benefit of poſſeſſing is beſt meaſur'd by the miſery of wanting them. This firſt rank therefore of Female Vertues which we are to treat of, will have that to recommend them; they being ſo ſtrictly neceſſary, that their abſence is not only a privative ill, but alſo expoſes to a deluge of all poſitive miſchiefs conſequent to that privation.

The leading feminine vertue is modeſty: which appears firſt in the look.

7. This will be found true in all the ſeverals we are to paſs through, but in none more eminently than in that we ſhall chuſe to begin with, the vertue of Modeſty; which may be conſidered in a double notion, the one as it is oppoſed to Boldneſs and Indecency, the other to Lightneſs and Wantonneſs. In the firſt acception *Zeno* has not ill defin'd it, to be *the Science of Decent Motion*, it being that which guides and regulates the whole Behaviour, checks and controles all rude Exorbitancies, and is the great Civilizer of Converſations. It is indeed a vertue of a general influence; do's not only ballaſt the mind with ſober and humble thoughts of ones ſelf, but alſo ſteers every part of the outward frame. It appears in the face in calm and meek looks, where it ſo impreſſes it ſelf, that it ſeems thence to have acquir'd the name of Shamefac'dneſs. Certainly, (whatever the modern opinion is) there is nothing gives a greater luſter to a Feminine Beauty: ſo that St. *Paul* ſeems not ill to have conſulted their concerns in that point, when he ſubſtitutes that as a ſuppletory Ornament to *the deckings of Gold and Pearl and coſtly Aray*, 1 *Tim.* 2. 9. But I fear this now will be thought too antiquated a dreſs, and an Apoſtle be eſteemed no competent judge in this ſcience; which is now become ſo ſolemn a thing, that certainly no Academy in the world can vie numbers with the ſtudents of this Myſtery. Yet when they have ſtrain'd their art to the higheſt Pitch; and innocent Modeſty, and native ſimplicity of Look, ſhall eclipſe their Glaring ſplendor, and triumph over their Artificial handſomneſs: on the other ſide, let a Woman be decked with all the embelliſhments of art nay and care of nature too, yet if Boldneſs be to be read in her face, it blots all the lines of Beauty, is like a cloud over the ſun, intercepts the view of all that was otherwiſe amiable, and render its blackneſs the more obſervable, by being plac'd near ſomewhat that was apt to attract the eyes.

Next in the words.

8. But Modeſty confines not its ſelf to the face, ſhe is there only in ſhadow and effigie; but is in life and motion in the words, whence ſhe baniſhes all indecency and rudeneſs, all inſolent vauntings, and ſupercilious diſdains, and what ever elſe may render a perſon troubleſome, or ridiculous to the company. Nor do's ſhe only refine the language, but ſhe tunes it too, modulates the tone and accent, admits no unhandſome earneſtneſs, or loudneſs of diſcourſe, the latter whereof was thought ſo indecent in *Carneades*, (though in his publick lectures) that the Gymnaſiarch reproved him for it. And ſure if 'twere not allowable in a Philoſopher in his ſchool, 'twill leſs become a Woman in ordinary converſe; and if we conſult *Prov.* 7. 11. and 9. we ſhall find loudneſs and clamor in women coupled with ſuch other epithets, as will ſurely not much recommend it. A womans Tongue ſhould indeed be like the imaginary muſick of the ſpheres, ſweet and charming, but not to be heard at diſtant.

9. And

9. And as Modesty prescribes the manner, so it do's also the measure of speaking; restrains all excessive Talkativeness, a fault incident no none but the bold; the monopolizing of discourse being one of the greatest assumings imaginable, and so rude an imposing upon the company, that there can scarce be a greater indecency in conversation. This is ingeniously exprest by our Divine Poet *Herbert*.

Not only in the manner, but also measure of speaking.

A Civil Guest
Will no more talk all, than eat all the Feast.

He that engrosses the Talk, enforces silence upon the rest, and so is presumed to look on them only as his Auditors and Pupils, whilst he magisteriously dictates to them: which gave occasion to *Socrates* to say, *It is arrogance to speak all, and to be willing to hear nothing.* It is indeed universally an insolent unbecoming thing, but most peculiarly so in a Woman.

10. The ancient Romans thought it so much so, that they allowed not that Sex to speak publickly, though it were in their own necessary defence; insomuch that when *Amesia* stood forth to plead her own cause in the senate, they look't on it as so prodigious a thing, that they sent to consult the oracle what it portended to the state. And though these first severities were soon lost in the successes of that Empire, *Valerius Maximus* could find but two more, whose either necessity or impudence, perswaded them to repeat this unhandsome attempt.

Speaking in publick has been in all states interdicted women.

11. And this great indecency of loquacity in Women, I am willing to hope is the reason why that Sex is so generally charged with it; not that they are all guilty, but that when they are, it appears so unhandsome, as makes it the more eminent and remarkable. Whether it were from that ungracefulness of the thing, or from the propension women have to it, I shall not determine; but we find the Apostle very earnest in his cautions against it, 1 *Cor.* 14. 35. He expresly enjoyns women to *keep silence in the Church*, where he affirms it a shame for them to speak: and though this seems only restrain'd to the Ecclesiastical assemblies, yet even so it reaches home to the gifted women of our age, who take upon them to be teachers; whereas he allowed them not to speak in the Church, no not in order to learning, though a more modest design than that of teaching. But besides this, he has a more indefinit prescription of silence to women, 1 *Tim.* 2. 11. *Let women learn in silence*; and again, v. 12. *to be in silence*. The Apostle seems to ground the phrase, not only on the inferiority of the woman in regard of the creation and first sin, v. 13, 14. but also on the presumption that they needed instruction, towards which, Silence has always been reckoned an indispensible Qualification, the introductory precept in all Schools, as that wherein all attention is founded. If some women of our age think they have outgone that novice state the Apostle supposes, and want no teaching; I must crave leave to believe, they want that very first principle which should set them to learn, *viz.* the knowledge of their own Ignorance: a science which so grows with study and consideration, that *Socrates* after a long life spent in pursuit of wisdom, gave this as the sum of his learning, *This only I know, that I know nothing*. This proficiency seems much wanting to our Female Talkers, who, in this, seem to confute the common maxim, and give what they have not, by making their ignorance visible to others, though it be undiscernable to themselves: and to such we may not unfitly apply the Sarcasm of *Zeno* to a talkative youth: *their ears are fallen into their tongue.*

And by St. Paul in the Christian Church.

12. But besides this assuming sort of Talkativeness, there is another usually charged upon the Sex, a mere chatting, pratling Humour, which maintains it self at the cost of their neighbours, and can never want supplies as long as there is any body within the reach of their Observation. This I would fain hope is most the vice of the vulgar sort of women, the education of the nobler setting them above those mean entertainments. Yet when 'tis remembred that St. *Paul*, 1 *Tim.* 5. 13. makes tatling the effect of idleness, it may not unreasonably be feared, that where there is most of the cause, there will be some of the effect. And indeed, it would puzzle one to conjecture, how that round of formal visits among persons of Quality should be kept up without this. That their visits should be only a dumb shew, none will suspect among women; and when the unfashionable themes of Houswifery, Piety, &c. are excluded, there will not remain many topics of discourse, unless this be called in to supply. And this indeed is a most inexhaustible reserve, it having so many springs to feed it, that 'tis scarce possible it should fail. And when 'tis farther considered, how apt a minister it is to Envy, Spleen, Revenge, and other feminine Passions, we cannot suppose it can be unacceptable where any of those bear sway.

So also the being tatlers.

But I believe it is not more frequently introduc'd by any thing than the vanity of Wit, which has no where a more free and exorbitant range than in censuring and deriding; nay, finds not only exercise but triumph too, vain persons seldom considering the infirmities or follies of others, without some complacencies, and assuming reflections on themselves; which how unagreeable it renders this liberty of talking to that Modesty we recommend, is obvious enough. And would God 'twere only opposite to that; but it is no less so to all the obligations of justice and charity also, which are scarce so frequently violated by any thing, as by this Licentiousness of the Tongue.

A consequent of talkativeness is revealing secrets.

13. There is yet another vice of it, for which the female Sex has been generally accus'd, and that is revealing of Secrets: an infirmity presum'd so incident to them, that *Aristotle* is said to have made it one of the three things he solemnly repented of, that he had ever trusted a Secret with a woman. But by how much the greater prejudice they lie under in this respect, the greater ought to be their caution to vindicate not only their persons but their Sex, from the imputation, which is indeed extreamly reproachful: this blabbing humour being a symptom of a loose, impotent Soul, a kind of incontinence of the Mind, that can retain nothing committed to it; but as if that also had its Diabetick Passion, perpetually and almost insensibly evacuating all. And indeed however we are willing to appropriate this to the Sex, yet the fault is owing to this ill constitution of the mind, which is ofttimes no less visible in men; as on the contrary, those women by reason and vertue have acquir'd a solidity and firmness of mind, are as sure repositories of a secret, as the most masculine confident: and such I have no intent to involve in this charge, but rather by proposing their example to the rest, shew that Nature has put them under no fatal necessity of being thus Impotent. A secret is no such unruly thing, but it may be kept in: they may take the wise man's word for it, *Ecclus.* 19. 10. *If thou hast heard a word let it die with thee, and be bold, it will not burst thee.*

Confident talking is unhappily mistaken for good breeding.

14. This is a piece of daring manliness, which they may affect without breach of Modesty; would God they would take it in exchange for that virile Boldness, which is now too common among many even of the best rank. Such a degenerous age do we now live in, that every thing seems inverted, even Sexes; whilst men fall to the effeminacy and niceness of women, and women take up the confidence, the boldness of men, and this too under the notion of good Breeding. A blush (though formely reputed the colour of vertue) is accounted worse manners than those things which ought to occasion it, and such as nothing but the simplicity of a Country Girl can excuse. But the infirmity for the most part proves very corrigible; a few weeks of the town discipline wears off that piece of rusticity, and advances them to a modish assurance. Nor is that design'd to terminate in it self, but it is to carry them on, till they arive to a perfect Metamorphosis, their Gesture, their Language, nay sometimes their Habit too being affectedly Masculine; so that what *Tacitus* speaks of *Vitellius* in relation to his being a Prince, we may apply to them, and say, that *if others did not remember them to be women, themselves could easily forget it.*

Which advances to ranting and swearing

15. Yet, were this affectation confin'd only to the more innocent indifferent things, 'twere more tolerable; but alas it extends farther, and there are women who think they have not made a sufficient escape from their sex, 'till they have assumed the vices of men too. A sober modest dialect is too effeminate for them: a blustring ranting stile is taken up, and (to shew them proficients in it) adorn'd with all the Oaths and Imprecations their memory or invention can supply: as if they meant to vindicate their sex from the imputation of Timerousness by daring God Almighty. 'Tis true indeed, an oath sounds gratingly out of whatever mouth, but out of a womans it hath such an uncouth harshness, that there is no noise on this side Hell can be more amazingly odious; yet this is a musick this discordant age hath introduc'd, no former having I think ever heard it in places at all civiliz'd. So that the Female Swearers want that poor shadow of excuse the men pretend to, it having been so far from customary, that the unwontedness could not but force them to some industry and pains, e'er they could acquire the habit, and set up for female Hectors; an essay, wherein they have been very kind to the masculine, by shewing the world there can be something worse.

And also drinking and prostitute lewdness.

16. 'Tis said there want not some who compleat the demonstration by the other parallel quality of Drinking also; a vice detestable in all, but prodigious in women, who put a double violence upon their nature, the one in the Intemperance, the other in the Immodesty. And though they may take their immediate copy from men, yet (to the praise of their proficiency) they outdo their Exempler and draw near the Ori-

ginal:

ginal: nothing human being so much beast as a drunken woman. This is evident enough if we look only on the meer surface of the crime: but if we dive farther into its inferences and adherencies, the affirmation is yet more irrefragable. She who is first a prostitute to Wine, will soon be to Lust also: she has dismist her Guards, discarded all the suggestions of Reason, as well as Grace; and is at the mercy of any, of every assailant. And when we consider how much fuller the world is of *Amnons* than *Josephs*, it will not be hard to guess the fate of that womans Chastity, which has no other bottom than that of Mens. So that unless her vice secure her vertue, and the loathsomness of the one prevent attempts on the other, 'tis scarce imaginable a woman that loses her Sobriety should keep her Honesty. So that indeed I might more properly have made this reflection when I come to speak of Modesty in the second notion of it, as it is oppos'd to Lightness and Wantonness, but it falls not much amiss now, to be the introduction to it.

Of Modesty in behaviour.

17. And if we consider Modesty in this sense, we shall find it the most indispensible requisite of a woman; a thing so essential and natural to the sex, that every the least declination from it, is a proportionable receding from Womanhood, but the total abandoning it, ranks them among Brutes, nay sets them as far beneath those, as an acquir'd vileness is below a native. I need make no collection of the verdicts either of the Philosophers or Divines in the case, it being so much an instinct of nature, that though too many make a shift to suppress it in themselves, yet they cannot so darken the notion in others, but that an Impudent woman is lookt on as a kind of Monster, a thing diverted and distorted from its proper form. That there is indeed a strange repugnancy to nature, needs no other evidence than the struggling, and difficulty in the first violations of Modesty, which always begin with regrets and blushes, and require a great deal of Self-denial, much of vicious Fortitude, to encounter with the recoilings and upbraidings of their own minds.

Guarded by natural Bashfulness.

18. I make no doubt but this age has arriv'd to as compendious arts of this kind, as industrious vice can suggest, and we have but too many instances of early proficients in this learning; yet I dare appeal even to the forwardest of them, whether at first they could not with more ease have kept their vertue than lost it. Certainly such are the Horrors and Shames that precede those first Guilts, that they must commit a rape upon themselves (force their own reluctancies and aversions) before they can become willing prostitutes to others. This their Seducers seem well to understand, and upon that score are at the pains of so many preparatory courtings, such expense of presents too; as if this were so uncouth a crime, that there were no hope to introduce it but by a confederacy of some more familiar vices, their Pride or Covetousness.

The best way to secure the Fort of Modesty is to preserve the Outworks.

19. The best way therefore to countermine those Stratagems of men, is for women to be suspiciously vigilant even of the first approaches. He that means to defend a Fort, must not abandon the Outworks, and she that will secure her Chastity, must never let it come to too close a siege, but repel the very first and most remote insinuations of a Tempter. Therefore when we speak of Modesty in our present notion of it, we are not to oppose it only to the grosser act of Incontinency, but to all those misbehaviours, which either discover or may create an inclination to it; of which sort is all Lightness of carriage, wanton glances, obscene discourse; things that shew a woman so weary of her honour, that the next comer may reasonably expect a surrender, and consequently be invited to the Assault. Indeed they are such, that one would rather think them the result of many acts, than meerly the Prologue to one; and that nothing but a custom of private sin, could supply Impudence enough to do what is so publickly scandalous; and where this is found in those of any considerable age, charity it self can scarce pass a milder censure. Yet possibly in those of the youngest sort, they may at first be taken up (as their dress is) meerly in imitation of others, embrac'd implicitly upon the authority of those, whose examples govern the Modes. When a poor girl, who has still so much of the child as to admire every thing that glitters, sees these things used by the gay people of the world, 'tis no wonder if she take these as part of their Accomplishments, and upon peril of that formidable calamity of being unfashonable, conform to them. Which yet do's not so much extenuate the guilt of those few seduced persons, as it aggravates that of the Seducers, and attests the strange corruption of the age, that those things which the less hardened sort of Prostitutes were formerly ashamed of, should now pass into the frequency and avowedness of a fashion, become a part of Discipline and Institution of youth: as if vice now disdain'd to have any punies in its school, and therefore by a preposterous anticipation, makes its pupils begin where they

were wont to end, initiates them at first into that shamelesness, which was wont to be the product only of a long habit. What the end will be of these Piqueerers in impudence, who thus put their vertue on the forlorn hope, is easie to divine. Yet is not this the only state of danger: they who keep their ranks, and though they do not provoke assaults, yet stay to receive them, may be far enough from safety. She that lends a patient ear to the praises of her Wit or Beauty, intends at first perhaps only to gratify her vanity; but when she is once charm'd with that Sirens song, bewitcht with that Flattery, she insensibly declines to a kindness for that person that values her so much. And when that spark shall be blow'd up by perpetual remonstrances of Passion, and perhaps little Romantick artifices of pretending to die for her, with a thousand other tricks, which Lust can suggest, 'twill like the *Naptha* Naturalists speak of, in a moment grow to an unquenchable flame, to the ruin both of her Vertue and Honour.

Innocence of the first intentions is not to be presum'd upon.

20. Let no woman therefore presume upon the Innocence of her first Intentions: she may as well upon confidence of a sound constitution, enter a pest-house and converse with the plague, whose contagion do's not more subtilly insinuate it self, than this sort of temptation. And as in that case she would not stay to define what were the critical distance, at which she might approach with safety, but would run as far from it as she could; so in this, it no less concerns her, to remove her self from the possibility of danger, and (how unfashionable soever it be) to put on such a severe Modesty, that her very looks should guard her, and discourage the most impudent assailant. 'Tis said of *Philopemen*, that the *Lacedemonians* finding it their interest to corrupt him with money, they were yet so possest with the reverence of his vertues, that none durst undertake to attack him; and sure 'twere not impossible for women to arrive at the same security. Such an authority there is in Vertue, that where 'tis eminent, 'tis apt to controle all loose desires, and he must not be only lustful but sacrilegious, that attempts to violate such a Sanctuary.

They are miserable trophies of Beauty that are built on the ruin of Vertue and Honour.

21. But perhaps that sex may fear, that by putting on such a Strictness, they shall loose the glory of their Beauty, which is now chiefly estimated by the number of those who court and adore them. To this in the first place I must say, that they are miserable Trophies to Beauty that must be built on the ruins of Vertue and Honour; and she that to boast the length of her hair should hang her self in it, would but act the same folly in a lower instance.

Beauty that is most reserv'd, will be the more priz'd.

22. But then secondly, 'tis a great mistake to think their Beauty shall be the less priz'd, since 'tis incident to mans nature to esteem those things most that are at a distance, whereas an easie and cheap descent begets contempt. So long as they govern themselves by the exact rules of Prudence and Modesty, their luster is like the Meridian Sun in its clearness, which though less approachable, is counted more glorious; but when they decline from those, they are like that Sun in the cloud, which though safelier gazed on, is not half so bright. But besides these collateral advantages, 'tis certain that Modesty gives an immediate and direct improvement to Beauty; for though men for their own vicious ends wish them sever'd, yet they cannot but think they are the most amiable when united, and you shall hear them often commend the aspect of that Modesty, which they would fain circumvent.

The woman who has lost her Honour, has lost almost the possibility of a return to Vertue.

23. But in the third place, there is nothing but such a Reservedness that can indeed make their Beauty triumphant. Parly and conquest are the most distant things; and she that descends to treat with an assailant, whatever he may tell her of his being her captive, 'tis but in order to the making her his; which when she once is, there is no state of servitude half so wretched, nothing in the world being so slavishly abject as a prostitute woman. For besides all the interest of another life which she basely resigns, she sacrifices all that is valuable in this: her Reputation she puts wholly in his power that has debauched her, and which is worse her Reformation too. If she should have a mind to return to vertue, she dares not for fear he should divulge her former strayings from it: so that, like *Catiline*, she is engag'd to future evils to secure the past. Yea she subjects her self not only to his lust, but to all his humors and fancies, nay even to all those who have been instrumental to their privacies, none of them all being to be displeas'd for fear of blabbing. And when 'tis remembred, what a sort of cattel they are, which are the engines in such affairs, there can scarce be any thing more deplorable than to be within their lash. 'Tis true indeed, some have found a way to cure this uneasiness by being their own delators, not only confessing but boasting their crime, and by an impudent owning prevent all accusations: yet even this serves but to attest the intolerableness of the former condition, when this worst of mischiefs is chose as a rescue. Their impatience of being

being always in awe, makes them take up that resolution for infamy, which *Cæsar* did for death, who said 'twas better do die once then to be always in fear. And though this desperate remedy may cure the fear, yet it ascertains the reproach; for whereas in the impeachment of others there is place for doubt, and charity may prompt some to disbelieve it, yet when the fact is justified by the offender, the evidence is uncontrolable, and withal doubles the infamy. For besides that which adheres to the crime, there is a distinct portion due to the impudence; yet, like the Scorpion, it must cure its own sting, and though it increases the obloquy, yet it deadens the sense of it.

She passes through several stages of guilt and misery, to speculative Atheism.

24. But when they have thus steel'd their foreheads against all impressions of Shame, they are still liable to many other painful effects of their sin. What fears of being abandoned, what jealousies of rivals do often torture them? And indeed not without ground: for they cannot but know, that the same humor of variety which engaged their Paramors in their love, may do the same for another, and another, and so on; it being as possible to grasp the air, as to confine a wandring lust. Besides, what anxious apprehensions have they of the approach of Age, which they are sure will render them loathed and despicable, as also of all intermedial decays of Beauty? How critically do they examine their glass? and every wrinkle that represents in their face, becomes a deep gash in the heart. But if they have at any time the leisure (or indeed the courage) to look inward, the view is yet more dreadful, a deform'd soul, spoil'd of its innocence, and rendred almost as brutish as the sin it has consented to. But though it be in some respects *like the beast that perisheth*, it is not, it cannot be in that which would most avail it; an endless being it cannot lose, nor can it expect any thing from that preeminence of its nature, but an infinity of misery. This is such an amazing contemplation, as, methinks, were it insisted on, should allay the hottest blood; no impure flames being so fierce as to contest with those of unquenchable fire. It is therefore though a very impious, yet no unskilful artifice of those who would vitiate women in their Manners, to corrupt them in their Principles, and by extinguishing all hopes or fears of another World, perswade them to immerse boldly into all the abominations of this. 'Tis said, this is now an art of wooing, the modern preludium to the basest proposals. It seems this age dares not trust only to the former ways of seducement, fears there will not be women enough that will forget the interests of another World; and therefore is fain to set up a new party of others to disbelieve it. And I fear that design has been too prosperous; many women are so much more concerned for their bodies than their souls, that they are contented the one should be elevated upon the depression and debasement of the other; and whilst with a vain transport, they can hear their outward form applauded, as Angelical, or Divine, they can very tamely endure to have their better part vilified and despised, defin'd to be only a puff of air in their nostrils, which will scatter with their expiring breath, or in the Atheists phrase, *Wisd.* 2. 3. *vanish as the soft air.* Whereas they should consider, that they who preach this Doctrine to them, design it only to infer a pernicious Use. 'Tis a Maxim in Politicks, that those counsels are suspiciously to be scan'd, which carry in their front the advisers interest; which certainly is never more visible than in this case, he that once gains this point, never needing to contest for all the rest. For he that can perswade a woman out of her Soul, will soon command her Body; and then what was at first his interest, becomes hers at last; and her wishes of the mortality of her soul, are much stronger than 'tis possible her belief of it could be: which confirms abundantly my affirmation of the servile, wretched condition of such a person. For if we judge that a very severe slavery which makes people desirous to resign a temporal being, what shall we think of that which provokes them to renounce an eternal?

Nothing can be more deplorable than the state of them who have abandoned their Vertue.

25. And now by this gradation of mischiefs we may judge of the deplorable state of those who have abandoned their vertue; wherein I doubt not the consciences of many cannot only attest, but much improve the description; and all I shall say to such, is, only to consult that bosom monitor, which till they do, all Homilies will be insignificant. My design was not therefore to tell them what they too well feel, but only to point out their Wracks as warnings to others.

It concerns those who are untainted, to consider the miseries of the other condition.

26. Let all those therefore who are yet untainted, and by being so, have their judgments clear and unbiast, consider soberly the misery of the other condition, and that not only to applaud, but secure their own; and when ever the outward pomps and gaudy splendors of a vitiated woman seem, like that of *Cresus*, to boast their happiness, let them look through that Fallacy, and answer with *Solon*, *that those only*

are happy who are so at their end. Their most exquisit deckings are but like the garlands on a beast design'd for Sacrifice; their richest gems are but the chains, not of their ornament but slavery: and their gorgeous apparel, like that of *Herod*, covers perhaps a putrid body, (for even that doth not seldom prove their fate) or however, a more putrid soul. They who can thus consider them, will avoid one great snare; for 'tis not always so much the lust of the flesh, as that of the eyes which betrays a woman. 'Tis the known infirmity of the Sex, to love gaiety, and a splendid appearance, which renders all temptations of that sort so connatural to them, that those who are not arrived to a more sober estimate of things, will scarce be secure. It will therefore be necessary for them to regulate their opinions, and reduce all such things to their just value, and then they will appear so trifling, that they can never maintain any competition with the more solid interests of Vertue and Honour. For though those terms seem in this loose age to be exploded; yet where the things are visible they extort a secret veneration, even from those who think it their concern publickly to deride them: whereas on the other side a defection from them exposes to all the contempt imaginable, renders them despis'd even by those who betray'd them to it, leaves a perpetual blot upon their Names, and their Family. For in the character of a woman, let Wit and Beauty, and all female accomplishments stand in the front, yet if wantonness bring up the rear, the Satyr soon devours the Panegyric, and (as in an Eccho) the last words only will reverberate, and her vice will be remembred when all the rest will be forgot. But I need not declame upon this theme; the Son of *Syrach* has done it to my hand, in many passages, but especially *Ecclus.* 23. to which I refer the Reader.

A most important means of preserving Modesty, is a judicious choice of Company.

27. What hath been already said, is, I suppose, sufficient to convince every woman how much it is her concern to keep her self strictly within the bounds of Modesty and Vertue. In order to which, there is nothing more important than a judicious choice of their Company; I mean not only for men, but women also. Vice is contagious, and this especially has that worst quality of the Plague, that 'tis malicious, and would infect others. A woman that knows her self scandalous, thinks she is reproach'd by the vertue of another, looks on her as one that is *made to reprove her ways*, as it is, *Wisd.* 2. 14. and therefore in her own defence strives to level the inequality, not by reforming her self, (that she thinks too hard a task) but by corrupting the other. To this end, such as are willing to screw themselves into an acquaintance, will be officiously kind, and by all arts of condescention and obliging, endeavour to ensnare a woman of reputation into their intimacy. And if they succeed, if they can but once entangle her into that cobweb-friendship; they then, spider-like, infuse their venom, never leave their vile insinuations till they have poisoned and ruined her. But and if on the other side they meet with one of too much sagacity to be so entrap'd; if they cannot taint her Innocence, they will endeavour to blast her Fame; represent her to the World to be what they would have made her, that is in the Psalmists phrase, *such an one as themselves*, *Psal.* 50. 24. so that there is no conversing with them, but with a manifest peril either of Vertue or Honour, which would methinks be a sufficient dissuasive. 'Tis true, 'tis not always in ones power to shun the meeting with such persons, they are too numerous, and too intruding to be totally avoided; unless, as St. *Paul* says, 1 *Cor.* 5. 10. *one should go out of the World.* But all voluntary converse supposes a choice, and therefore every body that will may refrain that, may keep on the utmost frontiers of civility, without ever suffering any approach towards intimacy and familiarity.

Were the vertuous shy herein, it might be a means of reclaiming those that have been loose.

28. And sure were this Distance duly observ'd, it might be of excellent use, a kind of lay Excommunication, which might come very seasonably to supply the want of the Ecclesiastick now out-dated. And this seems very well to agree with the sense of *Solon*, the wise *Athenian* Law-giver, who, besides that he shut the Temple-doors against them, interdicted them the sacred Assemblies; made it one of his laws, that an Adulteress should not be permitted to wear any ornaments, that so they might in their dress carry the note of their infamy. Should we have the like distinction observed, I fear many of our gaiest birds would be unplumed, and though the same be not now an expedient practicable, yet the former is, and might be of very good use. For besides that already mentioned of securing the innocent, it might perhaps have a good effect on the guilty, who could not but reflect with some shame on themselves, if they were thus singled out and discriminated; whereas whilst they are suffered to mix with the best Societies, (like hurt Deer in an herd) they flatter themselves they are undiscernable.

29. But

29. But indeed the advantage of this course is yet more extensive, and would reach the whole Sex, which now seems to lie under a general scandal, for the fault of particular persons. We know any considerable number of smutty ears casts a blackness on the whole field, which yet were they apart, would perhaps not fill a small corner of it; and in this uncharitable age, things are apt to be denominated not from the greater but worser part: whereas, were the precious severed from the vile, by some note of distinction, there might then a more certain estimate be made: and I cannot be so severe to womankind, as not to believe the scandalous part would then make but a small shew which now makes so great a noise.

It would also redeem the Sex from the general scandal that lies upon it.

30. Besides this I can suggest but one way more for women of honour to vindicate their Sex, and that is by making their own vertue as illustrious as they can; and by the bright shine of that, draw off mens eyes from the worser prospect. And to this there is requir'd not only innocency, but prudence; to abstain, as from all real evil, so *from the appearance of it too*, 1 *Thes.* 5. 22. not, by any doubtful or suspicious action, to give any umbrage for censure, but as the Apostle says in another case, 2 *Cor.* 11. 11. *to cut off occasion from them that desire occasion*; to deny themselves the most innocent liberties, when any scandalous inference is like to be deduc'd from them. And though perhaps no caution is enough to secure against the malicious, and the jealous; though 'tis possible some black mouth may asperse them, yet they have still *Plato*'s reserve, who being told of some who had defam'd him, *'tis no matter said he, I will live so that none shall believe them.* If their lives be such, that they may acquit themselves to the sober and unprejudiced, they have all the security can be aspir'd to in this world; the more evincing attestation they must attend from the unerring Tribunal hereafter; where there lies a certain appeal for all injur'd persons who can calmly wait for it.

That the honour of women may be safe, there is need not only of innocence but also prudence.

SECT. II.

Of Meekness.

1. IN the next place we may rank Meekness as a necessary feminine Vertue; this even Nature seems to teach, which abhors monstrosities and disproportions, and therefore having allotted to women a more smooth and soft composition of body, infers thereby her intention, that the mind should correspond with it. For though the adulterations of art can represent in the same Face beauty, in one position, deformity in another; yet nature is more sincere, and never meant a serene and clear forehead should be the frontispiece to a cloudy tempestuous heart. 'Tis therefore to be wish't they would take the admonition, and whilst they consult their glasses, whether to applaud or improve their outward form, they would cast one look inwards, and examine what symmetry is there held with a fair outside; whether any storm of passion darkned and overcast their interior beauty, and use at least an equal diligence to rescue that, as they would to clear their face from any stain or blemish.

Meekness is a feminine vertue, pointed to by nature in the composition of the Sex.

2. But it is not nature only which suggests this, but the God of nature too, Meekness being not only recommended to all as a Christian Vertue, but particularly enjoin'd to women as a peculiar accomplishment of their Sex, 1 *Pet.* 3. 4. where after the mention of all the exquisite and costly deckings of art, this one *ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*, is confronted to them, with this eminent attestation, that it is *in the sight of God of great price*, and therefore to all who will not enter dispute with God, and contest his judgment, it must be so too. Now, though Meekness be in it self a single entire Vertue, yet it is diversifi'd, according to the several faculties of the soul, over which it has influence; so that there is a Meekness of the Understanding, a Meekness of the Will, and a Meekness of the Affections; all which must concur to make up the Meek and quiet spirit.

Particularly enjoin'd by religion.

3. And first for the Meekness of the Understanding, it consists in a pliableness to conviction, and is directly opposite to that sullen adherence observable in too many; who judge of tenets not by their conformity to truth and reason, but to their prepossessions and tenaciously retain'd opinions, only because they (or some in

1. Meekness of Understanding.

whom they confide) have once own'd them; and certainly such a temper is of all others the most obstructive to Wisdom. This puts them upon the chance of a Lottery, and what they first happen to draw, determines them meerly upon the priviledge of its precedency, so that had *Mahomet* first seiz'd them, his tenure would have been as indefesable as Christ's now. How great the force of such prejudices are, we may see by the oppositions it rais'd against Christian Doctrine in gross at its first promulgation; the Jews blind Zeal for the Traditions of their Fathers, engaging them in the murder even of that very Messias whom those Traditions had taught them to expect, and after in the presecution of that Doctrine which his Resurrection had so irrefragably attested. And to justify the propriety of this observation, to those I now write to, 'tis expresly affirm'd, *Acts* 13. 50. That they made use of the zeal of the female Proselytes for that purpose. *The* Jews *stirred up the devout and honourable women, and rais'd a persecution against* Paul *and* Barnabas. So that 'tis no unseasonable advice to such, to be sure they see well their way before they run too fierce a carriere in it; otherwise the greatest heat without light, do's but resemble that of the bottomless pit, where flames and darkness do at once cohabit.

It avoids the extremes of stifness and easiness.

4. But whilst I decry this prejudicate stifness, I intend not to plead for its contrary extreme, and recommend a too easy Flexibility; which is a temper of equal, if not more ill consequence than the former. The adhering to one opinion can expose but to one error, but a mind that lies open to the effluxes of all new tenets, may successively entertain a whole ocean of delusions; and to be thus yielding, is not a Meekness, but servileness of Understanding. Indeed 'tis so great a weakness of mind, that the Apostle sinks it somewhat below the impotence of women, and resembles it to that of children, *Eph.* 4. 14. yet it seems the folly of some women had levell'd them with children in this matter, for the same Apostle takes notice of such, to whom as he gives the Epithet of silly, so the latter part of the Character speaks them incorrigibly so, *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*, 1 *Tim.* 3. 6. a description which if we compare with our times, we must think prophetick. For how many instances hath this age given us of women so led captive; who being either affected with the novelty, or seduced by the pretended zeal of a new teacher, have given up their understandings to him: and for a while this strong man has kept possession, but when a stronger than he hath come, it has fared as with him in the Gospel, a louder Zeal, or a newer Doctrine soon divides his spoils; and that by force of the very same principle on which he set up, which within a while undermines the latter also, and so successively, till the poor proselyte has been hurried through all the mazes of wild error, and at last perhaps (like a palate distracted by too much variety) she fixes upon that which at first she most decried. This has been eventually true in some, who setting out in the fiercest detestation of Popery, have wandred so long like the blinded *Syrians*, 2 *Kings* 6. 20. that they have at last found themselves in the midst of *Samaria*; by an insensible circular motion been brought about to that Religion, from which alone they design'd to fly. So little do itching ears know whether they may be carried: and indeed the ear when infected with that prurient humor, may vie Mischiefs with the tongue, which St. *James* tells us, *Chap.* 3. 15. *is* (though a little member) *a world of iniquity*.

Women by the opinion of their easiness, are rendred more expos'd to seduction.

5. 'Tis therefore the most important concern of all, to fortifie that so assailable part; but 'tis especially so of women, not only in respect of that natural imbecility, which renders them liable to seducement, but also because the opinion of their being so, makes them particularly aim'd at by seducers. For, as he who is to put off adulterated wares, will chuse the most unwary chapmen, so these Sophisticators of Divinity desire the most undiscerning Auditors. And truly that so many of that Sex are so, I do not so much impute to any natural defect, as to the loose notions they have of Religion, of which they have perhaps some general confused apprehensions, but have so little penetrated the depth of it, that they know not why they are *Christians* rather than *Turks*, why of the Church of *England* rather than that of *Rome*, or *Geneva*. And while they are thus unfixt, and have no better principle than Custom and Compliance; they have nothing to answer to any the grossest deceit that can be obtruded upon them, which for ought they know or have consider'd, may be as true as any thing they formerly profest. Now when any one in this condition shall be assaulted, not only by the repeated Importunities of false Teachers, but also by ingeminated threatnings of Hell and Damnation; she is like one awaked by the outcry of fire, and in that amaze will be apt to run where-ever the first discoverer of her danger shall lead her.

6. I shall therefore most earnestly recommend it as the best Antidote against the poison of novel Doctrines, to examine well the grounds of the old. For want of this it is that our Church has been exposed to so many frivolous cavils, it being too incident to the perverse pride of human nature, to speak evil of things we understand not. And had our she-zealots first consulted some sober guides, and from them understood upon what grounds the Practice as well as Doctrine of our Church was founded, they could not so easily have been carried away *by every wind of Doctrine*, as the Apostle phrases it, *Eph.* 4. 14.

The best antidote against novel doctrines, is to understand the grounds of the old.

7. Indeed this is no more than common justice exacts, which forbids the condemning even the vilest malefactor unheard, (and unheard and not understood, are in this case terms equivalent) yet sure they owe something more to that Church from whose ministry themselves must confess to have derived their Christianity, in whose bosom they have been cherish'd, and consequently may plead a mothers right in them. So that unless possession, which fortifies civil rights, destroys the Ecclesiastick; she may challenge besides that natural justice, (which is the common due of Humanity) a parental respect and reverence, a debt which is sure very ill answered by those who cast off her obedience before they have at all considered what it is she commands. And if the abdicating a child be a thing so unnatural, as needs some very important cause to justifie it; the renouncing of a Parent must require a reason as far transcending that, as the guilt do's, if it be causless; and such it must inevitably be in all, who for want of due examination, suffer themselves to be led into groundless prejudices and disgusts.

Common justice obliges to hear, before we condemn.

8. To prevent that guilt, and a multitude of others which spring from it, I must again repeat my Proposal, that women of Quality (who are presumed to want neither parts nor leisure for it) would a little look into the inside of the Religion they profess: if it be a true one, 'twill bear the inspection, truth never shunning the light; if it be not, the discovery cannot be too early. And indeed among the many remarkable impresses of truth our Church bears, this is one, that she do's not blindfold her Proselytes, leaves them the use of their discerning Faculty, and do's not by obtruding upon them an implicit belief, force them to lay down their Reason when they take up their Faith. And now why should not Ladies spend a few of their many idle hours in this Inquisition, I mean, not to themselves embark in a maze of controversies, but only to discern those plain grounds of Truth on which our Church builds; which if well digested, will prove a better amulet against delusion than the reading whole *Tomes* of Disputations, more apt to distract than fortify their understandings. And had they thus done, had their minds been ballasted by sober principles, so many of them had never made up the triumphs of so many and so various Seducers. And though to such this advertisement may come too late (like assistance after a defeat) yet it may be a seasonable caution to others, and to those I offer it, as that very temper wherein consists that rational Meekness of the Understanding I would recommend to them, which is equally violated by a blind Obstinacy, or as blind a Flexibility.

Women of Quality cannot better employ their leisure, than in looking into the grounds of the religion they profess.

9. And second sort of Meekness is that of the Will, which lies in its just subordination, and submission to a more supreme Authority, which in Divine things is the Will of God; in Natural or Moral, right Reason; and in human Constitutions, the command of Superiors. And so long as the Will governs it self by these in their respective Orders, it transgresses not the Meekness requir'd of it. But experience attests, that the Will is now in its depravation an imperious Faculty, apt to cast off that subjection to which it was design'd; and act independently from those motives which should influence it. This God knows is too common in all ages, all conditions, and sexes: but the feminine lies more especially under an ill name for it. Whether that have grown from the low opinion conceived of their reason, less able to maintain its Empire, or from the multipli'd habitual instances themselves have given of unruly wills, I shall not undertake to determine; but either way 'tis, I am sure, so great a reproach, as they should be very industrious to wipe off. And truly I know nothing more incentive to that endeavour, than the having a right estimate of the happiness as well as vertue of a governable Will. How calmly do those glide through all (even the roughest) events, that can but master that stubborn Faculty? A will resign'd to God's, how do's it enervate and enfeeble any calamity? Nay indeed it triumphs over it, and by that conjunction with him that ordains it, may be said to command even what it suffers. 'Twas a Philosophical Maxim, that a Wise moral man could not be injured, could not be miserable. But sure 'tis much more true of him who has that Divine Wisdom of Christian

2. Meekness of Will, which is regulated by the will of God in things supernatural.

resignation, that twists and inwraps all his choices with God's, and is neither at the pains nor hazard of his own elections; but is secure, that unless Omniscience can be deceived, or Omnipotence defeated, he shall have what is really best for him.

By reason in things natural. 10. Proportionable (though not equal) to this, is the happiness of a Will regulated by Reason in things within its Sphere: 'tis the dignity of human Nature, and that which distinguishes it from that of Beasts. Yea, even those grow more contemptible in their kinds, the farther they are removed from it. The stupid sturdiness of an Ass has render'd it Proverbial for folly, when the tractableness of other Animals has tempted some to list them among Rationals. Besides, Reason affords something of a Basis and Foundation for the Will to bottom on. He that governs himself by Reason (that being still the same) will act equal and consonant to himself; but he that do's a thing this moment, only because he will; may the next have as weighty an argument to do something quite contrary; and so may spend his whole time in unravelling his *Spiders webs*, as the Prophet rightly calls the vain designs of such brutish men, *Isa.* 59. 5. Not to speak of those recoilings and upbraidings of the rational faculties, which are the uneasy attendants of those who resist its more direct admonitions; there is nothing exposes to more secular ruins. An ungovernable Will is the most precipitous thing imaginable, and like the Devil in the Swine, hurries headlong to destruction; and yet deprives one of that poor reserve, that faint comfort of the miserable, Pity; which will not be so much invited by the misery, as averted by that wilfulness which caused it. Nay indeed, so little can such persons expect the compassion of others, that 'twill be hard for them to afford themselves their own: the consciousness that their calamities are but the issues of their own perverseness, being apt to dispose them more to hate than pity. And this is no small accumulation of wretchedness, when a man suffers not only directly, but at the rebound too; reinflicts his miseries upon himself by a grating reflection on his own madness. Yea, so great an aggravation is it, that even Hell it self is enhaunced and compleated by it; all the torments there being edged and sharpned by the woful remembrance, that they might once have been avoided.

In civil offices by the will of Superiors. 11. In the last place a Will duly submissive to lawful Superiors, is not only an amiable thing in the eyes of others, but exceedingly happy to ones self; 'tis the parent of peace and order both publick and private. A blessing so considerable, as is very cheaply bought with a little receding from ones own will or humor: whereas the contrary temper is the spring and orginal of infinite confusions, the grand incendiary which sets Kingdoms, Churches, Families, in cumbustion; a flat contradiction not only to the word, but even the works of God; a kind of Anticreative power, which reduces things to that Chaos from whence God drew them. Our age has given us too many and too pregnant instances of its mischievous effects, which may serve to enhaunce the value of that governable malleable temper I now recommend. And as a Will thus resign'd to Reason and just Authority, is a felicity all rational natures should aspire to; so especially the feminine Sex, whose passions being naturally the more impetuous, ought to be the more strictly guarded and kept under the severe discipline of Reason; for where 'tis otherwise, where a woman has no guide but her Will, and her Will is nothing but her Humor, the event is sure to be fatal to her self, and often to others also.

The restraint of the will, is a happy imposition. 12. And the hazard of this renders that other restrain'd of the will, I mean that of obedience to Superiors, a very happy imposition; though perhaps 'tis not always thought so, for those who resist the government of Reason, are not very apt to submit to that of Authorty. Yet sure God and nature to attest the particular expediency of this to women, by having placed that Sex in a degree of inferiority to the other. Nay farther 'tis observable, that as there are but three states of life, through which they can regularly pass, *viz.* Virginity, Marriage, and Widowhood; two of them are states of Subjection, the first to the parent, the second to the husband; and the third, as it is casual, whether ever they arrive to it or no, so if they do, we find it by God himself reckon'd as a condition the most desolate and deplorable. If I should say this happens upon that very score that they are left to their own guidance, the sad wracks of many would too much justify the gloss; but however it evinces, that God sets not the same value upon their being masterless, which some of them do, whilst he reckons them most miserable, when they are most at liberty.

Submission is by God's assignment the lot of women. 13. And since Gods assignation has thus determined subjection to be the womens lot, there needs no other argument of its fitness, or for their acquiescence. Therefore when ever they oppose it, the contumacy flies higher then the immediate

Supe-

Superior, and reaches God himſelf. And I am apt to think there would not many of that timorous Sex dare ſo far, were it not for ſome falſe punctillioes of honour, which (like thoſe among our Dueiliſts) have impoſed themſelves. Theſe repreſent Meekneſs and Submiſſion as a ſilly ſheepiſh quality unfit for women of breeding and ſpirit: whilſt an imperious obſtinacy paſſes for nobleneſs and greatneſs of mind. But alas they are woſully miſtaken in their notion of a great ſpirit, which conſiſts in ſcorning to do unworthy and vile things, and couragiouſly encountering the adverſe events of life, not in ſpurning at duty, or ſeeking to pull them ſelves from that Sphere where the divine Wiſdom hath placed them. No ſure, ſtubbornneſs is the mark only of a great ſtomack, not of a great mind; and the cruelty of a coward may as well denominate him valiant, as the ungovernableneſs of a woman can ſpeak her generous.

14. In this I preſume I ſpeak the common ſenſe of all; for what value ſoever they put upon themſelves, nothing renders them leſs acceptable to others; an imperious Woman being a plague to her Relatives, and a deriſion to Strangers, yea and a torment to her ſelf: every the leaſt contradiction (which a meek perſon would paſs over inſenſibly) inflaming ſuch an unruly temper, and tranſporting her to ſuch extravagances, as often produce very miſchievous Effects. On the other ſide if ſhe be humor'd and complied with, that ſerves only to make her more inſolent and intolerable; makes her humors grow to ſuch an height, that ſhe knows not her ſelf what would pleaſe her, and yet expects that others ſhould: ſo that to ſuch a one, we may apply what *Hannibal* ſaid of *Marcellus*, that if he were vanquiſh'd, he never gave reſt to himſelf, nor if he were victorious, to others. Certainly the uneaſineſs of a perverſe ſpirit is ſo great, that could ſuch come but to compare it with the calm and happy ſerenity of Meekneſs and Obedience, there would need no other Lecture to commend them to their eſteem or practice.

Nothing is more odious than an imperious woman.

15. The laſt branch of Meekneſs is that of Affections, and conſiſts in reducing the paſſions to a temper and calmneſs, not ſuffering them to make uproars within to diſturb ones ſelf, nor without to the diſquieting of others; and to this regulation Meekneſs is generally ſubſervient. Yet becauſe the correcting of ſome particular paſſions are more immediately aſſignable to other Vertues, I ſhall inſiſt only upon that, on which this has a more direct and peculiar influence, I mean Anger, a two-edged paſſion, which whilſt it deals its blows without, wounds yet more fatally within. The commotion and vexation which an angry man feels, is far more painful than any thing he can ordinarily inflict upon another: herein juſtifying the Epithet uſually given to anger, that it is a ſhort madneſs; for who that were in his right wits, would incur a greater miſchief to do a leſs. It is indeed ſo great a diſtemper of the mind, that he that is poſſeſt with it is incompetent for any ſober undertaking, and ſhould as much be ſuſpended from acting, as one in a Phrenſie or Lunacy. This was the judgment and practice too of *Plato*, who going to chaſtiſe a ſervant, and finding himſelf grow angry, ſtopt his correction; a friend coming in and asking what he was doing, *puniſhing*, replies he, *an angry man*, as thinking himſelf unfit to diſcipline another, till he had ſubdued his own paſſion. Another time his ſlave having offended him, *I would beat thee*, ſays he, *but that I am angry*. It were endleſs indeed to recite the black Epithets given by all Moraliſts to this vice. It ſhall ſuffice to take the ſuffrage of the Wiſeſt of Men, one that had acquainted himſelf to *know madneſs and folly*, *Eccl.* 1. 17. and we find it his ſentence, that *anger reſts in the boſom of fools*, *Eccl.* 7. 11.

3. Meekneſs of Affections

16. And what is thus univerſally unbecoming to human nature, cannot ſure be leſs indecent for the gentler Sex: 'tis rather more ſo, every thing contracting ſo much more of deformity, by how much it recedes from its proper kind. Now nature hath befriended Women with a more cool and temperate conſtitution, but leſs of fire and conſequently of choler, in their compoſitions; ſo that their heats of that kind are adventitious and preternatural, rais'd often by Fancy or Pride, and ſo both look more unhandſomely, and have leſs of pretence to veil and cover them. Beſides women have a native feebleneſs, unable to back and aſſert their Angers with any effective Force, which may admoniſh them 'twas never intended they ſhould let looſe to that Paſſion, which nature ſeems by that very unability to have interdicted them. But when they do it, they render themſelves at once deſpis'd and abhor'd; nothing being more ridiculouſly hateful, than an impotent Rage.

Violent paſſion moſt indecent in women.

17. But as the moſt feeble inſect may ſometimes diſturb, though not much hurt us, ſo there is one feminine Weapon which as 'tis always ready, ſo proves often troubleſome, I mean the Tongue, which, though in its loudeſt Clamors can naturally

Eſpecially when it breaks out in clamors and ſcolding.

rally invade nothing but the ear, yet even that is a molestation. The barking of a dog, though we are secure he cannot bite, is a grating unpleasant sound; and while Women seek that way to vent their Rage, they are but a sort of speaking brutes, and should consider whether that do not reflect more contempt upon themselves, than their most virulent reproaches can fix upon others.

Which though formidable, makes no advantage.

18. But some things have had the luck to acquire a Formidableness no body knows how, and sure there is no greater instance of it than in this case. A clamorous Woman is look'd on, though not with reverence, yet with much dread; and we often find things done to prevent or appease her Storms, which would be denied to the calm and rational desires of a meeker Person. And perhaps such successes have not been a little accessory to the fomenting the humor: yet sure it gives them little cause of triumph, when they consider how odious it makes them, how unfit (yea intolereble) for human Society; let them take the verdict of *Solomon* who declares it *better to dwell in a corner of a house top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house, Prov.* 25. 24. Nor do's the son of *Sirac* speak less sharply though more ironically, *Eccluf.* 26. 27. *A loud crying woman and a scold, shall be sought out to drive away the enemy.* And though he taxes the feminine Vices impartially enough, yet there is scarce any of them which he more often and more severely brands than this of unquietness. It seems 'twas a thing generally look'd on, as very insufferable; as appears by *Socrates*, who when he design'd to discipline himself to a perfect patience and tolerance, knew no better way of exercise, than to get a shrew to his Wife, an excellence that may perhaps again recommend a Woman, when we fall to an age of Philosophers; but at present 'twill be hard for any of our *Xantippes* to find a *Socrates*; and therefore that quality is as destructive to their interests in getting Husbands, as it is to the Husbands quiet when he is got. But I presume I need not declame further against this fault, which I suppose cannot be frequent among that rank of Women to whom this Tract is intended: for if neither moral nor divine Considerations have prevented it, yet probably civility and a gentile Education hath: a Scold being a creature to be look'd for only in Stalls and Markets, not among Persons of Quality. Yet if there be any that have descended to so sordid a practice, they have so far degraded themselves, that they are not to wonder if others substract that respect, which upon other accounts they might demand.

They whose angers are thus impotent against others, should turn the fury on themselves.

19. And to such I should recommend the usual method of Physick, which is to cure by revulsion, let that sharp humor which so habitually flows to the Tongue, be taught a little to recoil, and work inward; and instead of reviling others, discipline and correct themselves: let them upbraid their own Madness, that to gratifie an impotent, nay a most painful Passion, have degenerated from what their nature, their qualities, their education, design'd them. And if they can thus reverse their displeasures, 'twill not only secure others from all their indecent Assaults, but it will at last extinguish them. For Anger is corrosive, and if it be kept only to feed upon its self, must be its own devourer; if it be permitted to fetch no forrage from without, nor to nourish it self with suspicions and surmises of others, nor to make any sallies at the Tongue, it cannot long hold out.

To be clamorous is a sign of folly.

20. And how much they will herein consult their Interest and their Reputation too, they may be taught by *Solomon*, who makes it the distinctive *sign of a foolish woman to be clamorous, Prov.* 9. 13. whereas when he gives the character of his Excellent woman, he links Wisdom and Gentleness together, *she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness, Prov.* 31. 26. If this verdict may be admitted (as sure it ought, whether we consider his Wisdom, or dear bought experience in Women) it will confute the common plea of querulous Spirits, who think to seem insensible of any the least Provocation, is to appear silly and stupid; though truly if it were so, 'twould be full as eligible as to appear mad and raving, as they commonly do in the transport of their Fury.

Were the beauty of Meekness consider'd, it would be taken up instead of other ornaments.

21. To conclude, Meekness is so amiable, so indearing a Quality, and so peculiarly embellishing to Women, that did they but all consider it with half the attention they do their more trivial exteriour ornaments, 'twould certainly be taken up as the universal mode, in all the several variations of it this Section has presented.

SECT.

Sect. III.

Of Compassion.

OF near Affinity to the Vertue of Meekneſs, is that of Mercy and Compaſſion, which indeed can ſcarce thrive in any place where the former hath not prepared the ſoil: anger and obſtinacy being like that rough eaſt-wind which brought the Egyptian locuſts, *Exod.* 10. 13. to eat up every green thing in the land. A mind haraſſed with its own impatiency, is not at leiſure to obſerve, much leſs condole the calamities of others. But as a calm and clear day befriends us with a more diſtinct proſpect of diſtant objects; ſo when all is quiet and ſerene within us, we can then look about us, and diſcern what exigencies of others invite our pity.

Compaſſion is a feminine vertue, that has an affinity to Meekneſs.

2. I need not ſay much to raiſe an eſtimate of this Vertue, ſince 'tis ſo eſſential to our nature, ſo interwoven in the compoſition of humanity, that we find in Scripture phraſe, Compaſſion is generally ſeated in the moſt inward ſenſible part of our frame, the bowels. So *Col.* 3. 12. *Put on therefore bowels of mercy*; and *Phil.* 2. 1. *Bowels and mercies.* So that a cruel ruthleſs perſon unmans himſelf, and is by the common vote of mankind to be liſted among brutes; nay, not among the better, but only the more hateful, noxious ſort of them.

'Tis a vertue ſeated in our moſt inward ſenſible part, our bowels.

3. But this is yet more unnatural in the female Sex, which being of ſofter mold, is more pliant and yielding to the impreſſions of pity, and by the ſtrength of fancy redoubles the horror of any ſad object. Yea ſo remarkable is this tenderneſs, that God, when he would moſt magnify his own Compaſſion, illuſtrates it by that of women, as the higheſt human inſtance. Indeed ſuch a propenſion have women to commiſeration, that they are uſually taxed with an exceſs in it; ſo that any imprudent lenity is proverbially called, A womaniſh Pity, and therefore it may be thought an impertinence to exhort them to that which they can ſcarce avoid. But to this I anſwer; firſt, that in this degenerous age, 'tis no news to ſee people violate their inſtincts, as well as their duties, and be worſe than their nature inclines them; many ſins being committed even againſt the grain, and with violence to conſtitution.

'Tis moſt connatural to the female Sex.

4. Yet ſecondly, 'tis not a meer melting of the eyes, or yerning of the bowels I deſign to recommend: Alas, their tears will not be drink to a thirſty ſoul, nor will ſhivering at his nakedneſs cloth him. This is ſuch an inſignificant mercy as St. *James* deſcribes, ſaying to a brother or ſiſter, *be ye warmed, be ye filled, but not giving them things needful to the body*, ch. 2 16. Indeed, ſhe that weeps over thoſe diſtreſſes ſhe will not relieve, might have been fit to be enter'd in the liſt of the mourning women among the Jews and Heathens, who were hired to make up the tragick Pomp of Funerals with their mercenary ſorrow, but had no real concern in that loſs they ſeem'd to bewail. 'Tis therefore a more active ſort of Compaſſion to which I would invite them; and yet for method ſake, I ſhall conſider it under two diſtinct heads, Giving, and Forgiving.

Is not a melting of the eyes, or yerning of the bowels, but a charitable concern to help and relieve.

5. By Giving, in this place, I mean not a general liberality, (though that prudently bounded, is an Excellence well becoming perſons of fortune) but only ſuch a Giving as terminates upon the needy, and is applied to ſuccour their indigencies. To give to thoſe from whom they may expect returns, may be a deſign, but at the beſt can be but generoſity and frankneſs of humor. 'Tis only then mercy (as Chriſt Himſelf has defin'd it) when it is to thoſe from whom they can *hope for nothing again.*

1. By Giving, or liberality.

6. And in this Vertue women have in former ages eminently excell'd, yea ſo eſſential was it, that we find *Solomon* thought not their character compleat without it, but numbers it among the properties of his vertuous Woman, *Prov.* 31. 20. *She ſtretcheth forth her hand to the poor, and reacheth her hand to the needy.* And it is a little obſervable, that after he has deſcrib'd her induſtry and diligence for the acquiring of Wealth, this is ſet in the front of her disburſments, as the principal uſe ſhe made of it; and precedes her providing ſcarlet for her houſhold, or fine linen and purple for her ſelf, v. 21, 22. The application is very obvious, and admoniſhes all that own the ſame title of vertuous Women, to prefer the neceſſities of others before their own ſuperfluities and delicacies. Nay, if they look further, and conſider who it is that

This was a principal part of the character of Solomons vertuous Woman to ſtretch forth her hand to the poor.

that is personated in the poor, that begs in every needy distrest suppliant, and that will finally own every act of mercy as done to himself; methinks they should sometimes think fit to sacrifice even their most moderate enjoyments to their charity, be ashamed to serve themselves before their Saviour, or let him stand naked and hungry, whilst they are solacing with that which would relieve him.

This relief of others is supplanted by vanity and luxury.

7. But how then shall they answer it, who suffer him to be supplanted, not by their needs, but excesses; who have so devoted their hearts and purses to vanity and luxury, that they have neither will nor power to succour the wants of others? How unequal and disproportionate is it, that those who study to fling away money upon themselves, cannot be tempted by any importunities and distress, to drop an alms to the poor? What a preposterous sight is it to see a Lady, whose gay Attire gives her the glittering of the Sun, yet have nothing of its other properties, never to cheer any drooping, languishing creature by her influence? 'Tis the counsel of the son of *Sirac*, *not to give the poor any occasion to curse thee*, *Eccluf.* 4. 5. But sure such persons do it, if the poor happen not to have more charity than they exemplify to them. For when they shall find such hard hearts under such soft raiment, see them bestow so much upon the decking their own bodies, and do nothing towards the necessary support of theirs; 'tis a shrewd trial of their Meeknes. Poverty is apt of it self to imbitter the spirit, and needs not such an additional temptation.

Which lavish expence, is the most sharp incitation of the poor to impatience.

8. Nay farther, when a poor starving wretch shall look upon one of these gay creatures, and see that any one of the baubles, the loosest appendage of her dress, a fan, a busk, perhaps a black patch, bears a price that would warm his empty bowels; will he not have sharp incitations not only to execrate her pride, and his own poverty, but consequently to repine at the unequal distribution of providence, and add sin to his misery? The denial therefore of an alms may be a double cruelty, to the soul as well as to the body. 'Tis said of *Xenocrates*, that a chased Bird flying to his bosom, he rescued it with much satisfaction, saying, He had not betraid a suppliant; but this is in that case reverst, and in an higher instance; for what can be more the betraying of a suppliant, then instead of supplying his wants, to rob him of his innocence, and be his snare in lieu of his refuge? This is a consideration I wish more deeply imprest upon the women of this age; and truly 'tis their concern it should be so; for since at the last day the inquest shall be so particular upon this very thing, 'tis but necessary they should examine how they are fitted to pass that test.

Women of quality should audit the expences of vanity and charity.

9. Let them therefore keep a preparatory audit within their own breast, reflect upon the expences of their vanity, what the delicacy of their food, what the richness and variety of their clothes, nay what the meer hypocrisies of their dress, in false hair, and complexion has cost them; to which they may also add the charge of their recreations and divertisements, those costly arts of chasing away that time, which they will one day wish to recall: let them I say compute all this, and then confront to it the account of their charity, and I much fear the latter will with many of them be comparatively as undiscernable, as *Socrates* found *Alcibiades*'s Lands in the Map of the whole World, be so perfectly overwhelm'd, that it will appear little in their own sight and nothing in Gods.

They who give much may have their liberality outvied by a mite.

10. For if the poor Widows mite acquir'd a value meerly from her poverty, that she had no more; by the rule of contraries we may conclude, how despicable the scanty oblations of the rich are in Gods account. If even their liberality who gave much, was outvied by a farthing, *Mark* 12. 41. to what point of diminution must their niggarly offerings, who give little, be reduced, especially when they shall be compared with the numerous and costly sacrifices they make to pride and luxury. Nay I wish some were not guilty of more than the disproportion, even the total omission of charity, that in a multitude of Taylors bills cannot produce the account of one garment for the poor, that amidst the delicacies of their own diet (nay perhaps of their dogs too) never order'd so much as the crumbs of their Table to any hungry *Lazarus*. But let all such remember, that there will come a time, when one of *Tabitha*'s coats, *Acts* 9. 39. will be of more value than all their richest Wardrobes, though they could number Gowns with *Lucullus*'s Cloaks, which the *Roman* Story reports to be five thousand; and that when their luxurious fare shall only feast the worms, and render them passive in that Epicurism they acted before, they will wish they had made the bellies of the poor their refectory, and by feeding them nourish'd themselves to immortality.

11. Let

Possessors of good things are only stewards and factors.

11. Let this I say be seriously remember'd now, lest hereafter they fall under the same exprobrating remembrance with the rich man in the Gospel, *Luke* 16. 25. *Remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and* Lazarus *that which was evil; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* A Text which St. *Gregory* professes was ever sounding in his ears, and made him look with suspicion and dread upon that grandeur to which he was advanced, as fearing it might be design'd as his final reward. With what terror then may those look upon their present good things, who by ingrossing them wholly to themselves, own them as their entire portion, and implicitly disclaim their share of the future? For to that none must pretend, who receive their transitory goods under any other notion, than that of a Steward or Factor: as we may see in the parable of the Talents, where those that had the reward of the five and ten Cities were not such as had consumed their Talents upon their own riot and excesses, but such as had industriously employed them according to the design of their Lord. And if it there fared so ill with the meer unprofitable servant, who had hoarded up his Talent, what shall become of those, who squander away theirs, and can give no account either of Use or Principle?

The examples of primitive charity, should be propos'd by women of quality to themselves.

12. Were these considerations duly laid to heart, we might hope to see some of the Primitive Charity revive, when women of the highest rank converted their Ornaments and costly Deckings into clothing for the poor, and thought no retinue so desirable, so honorable as a train of Alms-folks. But I speak improperly, when I make the poor their attendants, for indeed they rather attended the poor, did not only order the supply of their wants, but were themselves their ministers, waited about their sick beds, drest their most loathsome ulcers, and descended to all the most servlie offices about them.

Even the acting personally in it.

13. But these were such heights, such transcendencies of mercy, as requir'd a deeper foundation of Humility than will now be often met with: yet let me take the occasion to say, that it may be a good managery of a charity to act (as far as they can) personally in it. For besides that it prevents some abuses and frauds, which deputed Agents may sometimes be tempted to, they pay God a double tribute in it, of their persons as well as their fortunes. Next they bring themselves into acquaintance with the poor, and by that means correct those contempts and nice disdains, which their own prosperity is too apt to create. Further yet, they excite their own Compassion, which being a motion of the sensitive part of the mind, cannot be stirr'd so effectually by any thing, as by the presence of the object; the most pathetick tragical description of a distress, being not able to affect us half so much as one ocular demonstration. Lastly 'tis an apt means to increase their thankfulness to Almighty God, whose bounty to themselves must needs make a deeper impression, when 'tis compared with the necessitous condition of others. For things are best illustrated by their contraries, and 'tis too observable in our depraved nature, that we value not things by their real positive worth, but comparatively as they excel others, nor ever make a right estimate of what we enjoy, till our own or others wants instruct us.

And therefore it would be a commendable industry to acquire those skils which may enable to reliefs.

14. Upon all these considerations it may be a very becoming useful circumstance in any charitable ministry to be themselves the actors; and to that end, 'twill be a very commendable industry, to qualifie themselves to be helpful to the poor in as many instances as they can; not only opening their purses, but dispensatories too, providing medicines for such as either by disease, or casualty want that sort of relief. A charity which I doubt not is practised by many, and I wish it were by more, that our nicer Dames who study only Cosmeticks for themselves, would change the Scene, and instead of repairing or disguising their own complexions, study the restauration of their decrepit patient limbs. And sure, though it be a less fashionable, 'tis much a better sight, to see a Lady binding up a sore, than painting her face; and she will cast a much sweeter savour in God's nostrils, with the smell of unguents and balsoms, than with the most exquisite odours and perfumes. For since God professes, *Isa.* 1. 13. that that very *incense* which was design'd as a part of his worship, *was an abomination to him*, because not accompanied with the acts of Mercy, we cannot think he will better like of those, which have no higher aim than delicacy and sensuality.

Compassion as it is exercis'd in giving, is also in forgiving.

15. But besides this part of mercy in Giving, there is another, that of Forgiving, which may happen to be of a larger extent than the former: for whereas that was confin'd to the poor, this has no such limits, but as it is possible to be injured by persons of all ranks, so this pardoning mercy is to reach equally with that possibility. This is that part of charity which we peculiarly call clemency, a vertue which not only Christianity but Morality recommends. The Antient *Romans* had it in such ve-

veration, that they number'd it not only among Vertues but Deities, and built it a temple. And they were somewhat towards the right in it, for it was, though not God, yet so eminent an attribute of his, that nothing can more assimilate man unto him.

Of this vertue there are heathen as well as Christian examples.

16. There are many Heroick acts of this kind to be met with among the vertuous Heathens. *Lycurgus* not only forgave *Alexander* who had struck out his eye, but entertain'd him in his house, and by his gentle admonitions reclaim'd him from his former vicious life. *Aristides* being after signal services, and without crime, unjustly banish'd by his Citizens, was so far from acting, or imprecating against them, that at his departure from *Athens* he solemnly prayed the Gods, that they might never by any trouble or distress be forc'd to recall him. So *Phocion* being unjustly condemned, left it as a solemn charge to his son *Phocas*, that he should never revenge his death. A multitude of the like examples might be produced, but we need not borrow light from their faint Tapers, when we have the Sun-beams, I mean the Sun of Righteousness, our blessed Saviour, who, as he has recommended this grace by his precept, so he has signally exemplified it to us in his Practice; the whole design of his descent to earth being only to rescue his enemies from destruction. And as every part of his life, so the last Scene of it was particularly adapted to this end, and his expiring Breath expended in mediating for his crucifiers; *Father forgive them, Luke* 23. 34. And this copy of his was transcribed by his first followers, the Primitive Christians in their severest Martyrdoms praying for their persecutors.

As there are detestable instances of the contrary vice.

17. Thus are we in the Apostles phrase *compassed about with a cloud of witnesses, Heb.* 12. 1. of eminent examples, which ought to have a forcible influence upon all, but methinks should not fail to have it on that Sex, whose native tenderness predisposes them to the Vertue, and who need but swim with the stream of their own inclinations. How can we think that their melting eyes should ever sparkle fire, or delight in spectacles of cruelty, that their flexible tender hearts should turn into Steel or Adamant, be uncapable of all impressions of pity? Yet God knows such changes have too often been seen: Women have not only put off that softness peculiar to them, but the common instincts of Humanity, and have exceeded not only savage men, but beasts in cruelty. There have been too frequent instances of the implacable malice, and insatiable cruelties of women. I need not call in the aid of Poetick fiction, and tell them of *Clytemnestra*, *Medea*, or the *Belides*, with hundreds of others, celebrated as instances of Heroick wickedness. There are examples enough in more authentick Stories, The *Roman Tullia*, the *Persian Parysatis*; and that we may not pass by the sacred Annals, *Jezebel*, and *Athaliah*. I forbear to multiply examples of this kind, of which all ages have produced some so eminent, as have render'd it a common observation, that no cruelty exceeds that of an exasperated woman: and it is not much to be wonder'd at, since nothing can be so ill in its pristine state as that which degenerates from a better. No enmity we know so bitter as that of alienated friends; no such persecution as that of Apostats, and proportionably no such ferity as that of a perverted mildness. So that the Poets were not much out, who as they represented the Graces under the figures of women, so they did the Furies too. And since 'tis in their election which part they will act, they ought to be very jealous over themselves. The declinations to any vice are gradual, sometimes at first scarce discernable; and probably the greatest monsters of cruelty, would at the beginning have detested those inhumanities which afterwards they acted with greediness.

Suspicion begets a quarrel, that makes hatred, that malice, that revenge.

18. It concerns them therefore to ward those beginnings whose end may be so fatal. She that is quick in apprehending an affront, perhaps will not be so quick in dismissing that apprehension; and if it be permitted to stay, 'twill quickly improve, twenty little circumstances shall be suborn'd to foment it with new suspicions, till at last it grow to a quarrel, from thence to hatred, from that to malice, and from that to revenge: and when that black passion has overspread the mind, like an Egyptian darkness it admits no gleam of Reason or Religion, but hurries them blindfold to their own ruin often as well as others.

The spleen of a woman a most frequent cause of murders.

19. Let none think this only a fancy or scheme of Discourse: there have been too many tragical experiments of its truth. How many men have been mortally engaged upon no weightier original than the Spleen of a woman? the frantick notion of honour among our Duellists fitly corresponding with the as frantick impulses of feminine revenge, and any imaginary injury (or perhaps but just imputation) to the Lady, obliging her Gallant to rush upon the most real sin and danger. A madness something beyond that which the Romances describe of Knight Errantry: for that

gene-

generally is for the relief of distressed Damsels, but this is only to humor the too prosperous ones, the insolent and the proud. Those therefore that have observed the common occasions of Duels, have not unfitly divided them between Wine and Women; it being hard to say which is the most intoxicating and besotting. The Son of *Sirac* couples them together, *Eccluf.* 19. 2. *Wine and Women will make men of understanding fall away.* The many modern examples of this mischief, as they should strike an extreme terror into those Women who have been any way accessary to the death, or but danger of any man; so are they just matter of caution to all, so to regulate their Passions, that they never come within distance of Implacability; for if once they arrive there, themselves can give no stop.

20. In order to this, 'twill be well to consider at the first incitation, what the real ground is; perhaps sometimes they are angry (as the Galatians were at St. *Paul*, *Gal.* 4. 16.) *at those that tell them the truth*; some scandalous, or at least suspicious behaviour, may have engaged a friend to admonish them; (an office that has sometimes prov'd very fatal; those commonly that have most guilt having less patience to hear of it.) And if this be the case, 'tis the greatest injustice in the world to make that a quarrel which is really an obligation: and therefore instead of maligning their Monitor, they ought to thank and reverence him. Nay, though the accusation be not with that candid design, but be meant as a reproach; yet if it be true, it should not excite anger at their accusers, but remorse, and reformation in themselves.

Many times the telling a charitable truth has given the provocation

21. It was the saying of a Wise man, that he profited more by his enemies than his friends; because they would tell him more roundly of his faults. And this is excellently improv'd by *Plutarch*, in his Tract, *Of the benefits to be reap'd from Enemies*: so that even a malicious accusation may be a kindness, and consequently ought not to be repaid with an injury. But suppose, in the last place, that the aspersion be not only unkind, but untrue, it will not even than be safe to let loose to their indignation. First, in respect of Prudence, an angry vindication serving the design of the enemy, and helping to spread the calumny; whereas a wise neglect and dissembling do's often stifle and suppress it. Secondly, in respect of duty, for all that own themselves Christians must confess they are under an obligation to forgive, and not to revenge. Now if they intend to pay a real obedience to this Precept, 'twill be the more easie, the sooner they set to it. He that sees his house on fire, will not dally with the flame, much less blow, or extend it, resolving to quench it at last. And anger is as little to be trusted, which if once throughly kindled, will scarce expire but with the destruction of the subject it works on.

A reproof though unkindly meant, is a benefit.

22. Let therefore the disoblig'd not look back upon the injury, but forward to those mischiefs which too sharp a resentment may betray them to: let them consider, that the boiling of their blood may finally cause the effusion of anothers, and wrath may swell into murder. If they would do thus, and instead of those magnifying opticks wherein they view the wrong, make use of the other end of the perspective, to discern the dismal event at distance; it would sure fright them from any nearer approach, would keep them within those bounds which their duty prescribes them, and thereby acquaint them with a much greater and more ingenious pleasure than their highest revenge can give them: I mean that of forgiving injuries, and obliging the injurious. This is a pleasure so pure and refined, so noble and heroick, that none but rational natures are capable of it; whereas that of Spight and Revenge (if it can be call'd a pleasure) is a meer bestial one; every the most contemptible animal can be angry when 'tis molested, an endeavour to return the mischief.

The injury of an unkindness, is far less than that of resentment.

23. It should therefore, methinks be an easy determination, whether to embrace that Clemency and Compassion which we see exemplified in the wisest and best of men, nay in the Omniscient Immortal God, or that savage fierceness of the ignoblest creatures. This is certain, that no woman would be content to assume the outward from of any of those; why then should they subject their nobler part, the mind, to such a transformation? For, as there are no monsters so deformed, as those which are compounded of man and beast: so among them all, nothing can be more unnatural, more odious, than a Woman-Tiger. I conclude all with the advice of *Solomon*, *Prov.* 17. 14. *The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention before it be medled with.* When once a breach is made upon the spirit by immoderate anger, all the consequent mischiefs will flow in, like a rapid stream when the banks are broken down; nor is there any way to prevent it, but by keeping the mounds entire, preserving that Tenderness and Compassion which God and Nature do equally inforce and recommend.

Compassion is the appropriate temper of men, and Almighty God; but ferity the worst of beasts.

Sect. IV.

Of Affability.

Affability a vertue peculiarly appropriate to women of quality.

1. IN the next place we may reckon Affability and Courtesie; which as it is amiable in all, so it is singularly so in women of Quality, and more universally necessary in them than in the other Sex. For men have often charges and employments which do justify, nay perhaps require somewhat of sternness and austerity; but women ordinarily have few or no occasions of it, and those who have well digested the former Lectures of Meekness and Compassion, will not be apt to put it on unnecessarily. Now Affability may be considered either as a meer human Accomplishment, or as a divine Vertue; in either notion 'tis commendable, but 'tis the latter that gives it the highest Excellence and Perfection.

Its extraction is generous.

2. To begin with the first notion of it, we may take an estimate of its worth by its Cause, and by its Effects. For its Cause, it derives it self either from a native candor and generosity of mind, or from a noble and ingenuous Education, or something jointly from both; and these are as good Originals as any thing meerly moral can flow from. And that these are indeed its sources, common experience will attest: those of the greatest Minds, and best Extractions, being usually most condescending and obliging; whereas those of most abject Spirits and Birth, are the most insulting and imperious. *Alexander* the Great, though terrible in the field, yet was of a gentle, complaisant conversation, familiarly treating those about him: yet *Crispinus*, *Narcissus*, *Nymphidius*, and other enfranchised bondmen, we find insolently trampling upon the Roman Senators and Consuls. 'Tis therefore a great error for persons of honour, to think they acquire a reverence by putting on a supercilious gravity, looking coily and disdainfully upon all about them; tis so far from that, that it gives a suspicion that 'tis but a pageantry of greatness, some mushrom newly sprung up, that stands so stiff, and swells so much. But instead of teaching others to keep their distance, this fastidious disdain invites them to a closer inspection, that if there be any flaw either in their life or birth, 'twill be sure to be discovered, there being no such prying inquisitor as curiosity, when 'tis egg'd on by a sense of contempt.

Affability the cheapest price of love.

3. On the other side, if we consider the effects of Courtesie, they are quite contrary; it endears to all, and often keeps up a Reputation in spight of many blemishes: a kind look or word from a Superior is strangely charming, and insensibly steals away mens hearts from them. This the Wise man refers to *Ecclus.* 18. 16. when he prefers a Word before a Gift. And 'tis *Plutarch*'s observation of *Cleomenes* King of *Sparta*, that when the Grecians compared his Affability and easiness of Access with the sullen state and pride of other Princes, they were so enamor'd with it, that they judged him only worthy to be a King. And as there is no certainer, so also no cheaper way of gaining love: a friendly salutation is as easy as a frown or reproach; and that kindness may be preserv'd by them, which if once forfeited, will not at a far greater price be recovered.

Considering human vicissitudes, the most prudent.

4. Besides, when human vicissitudes are considered it may be a point of Prudence too; the greatest persons may sometimes want assistance from the meanest; nay sometimes the face of affairs is quite changed, and the wheel of Fortune turns them lowest that were uppermost, and proportionably elevates the meanest. 'Tis wisdom therefore so to treat all, as to leave no impressions of unkindness, since none is so despicable, but may possibly at one time or other have an opportunity to retaliate. 'Twas therefore a prudent as well as an equitable resolution of the Emperor, who said he would so entertain the addresses of his Subjects, as, if he were a Subject, he would wish the Prince should entertain him: a rule very worthy to sway all Persons of Honour in their entercourse with others. And since even among Persons in Command there are degrees, and she which is superior to one, is inferior to another; they have a ready way to compare the civility they pay, with that they expect. Let therefore one who meets with a cold, neglectful Treatment from any above her, examine her own resentments, and then reflect, that if she give the like to those below her, they will doubtless have the same sense; and therefore let her resolve never to offer what she so much dislikes to bear: and she that do's thus, that makes such

such inferences, will convert an Injury into a Benefit; civilize her self by the rudeness of others, and make that ill nurture her own discipline.

5. But hitherto we consider Affability only in its ethnic dress, as it is a human ornament; 'twill appear yet more enamouring upon a second view, when we look on it as bearing the impress of the Sanctuary, as a divine Vertue. And that it is capable of being so, we have the authority of St. *Paul*, who inserts it in the number of those Christian Graces which he recommends to his Roman Proselytes; *Condescend to them of low estate, Rom.* 12. 16. And that we may the better discern its value, 'tis observable that he links it with the most eminent Vertue of Humility; for it immediately follows his Precept of *be not high minded*. Indeed 'tis not only joyned with it, as a Friend or Allie, but deriv'd from it as its stock and Principle: and certainly a more divine extraction it cannot have, Humility being the *Alpha* and *Omega* of Vertues, that which lays the foundation (without which the most towring Structure will but crush it self with its own weight) and that which perfects and consummates the building also, secures and crowns all other Graces; which when they are most verdant and flourishing, are like *Jonas*'s gourd, that may afford some shadow and refreshment for a while, but are apt to breed that worm which will destroy them. When once they are smitten with Pride, they instantly fade and wither; so necessary is Humility both for the acquiring and conserving all that is good in us.

Affability is ennobled by its alliance with Humility.

6. We may therefore conclude, that courtesie, and obligingness of Behaviour which proceeds thence, is in respect of its spring and original, infinitely to be preferr'd before that which descends from no higher stock than natural or prudential motives. And since 'tis natural for every production to have some similitude to that which produces it, we shall find it no less excellent in respect of its properties than its descent. I shall instance only in two, Sincerity, and Constancy.

Which is a better motive than civility or prudence.

7. For the first as far as Affability partakes of Humility it must of Sincerity also, that being a vertue whose very elements are plainness and simplicity: for as it has no designs which want a cover, so it needs none of those subtilities and simulations, those pretences and artifices requisite to those that do. 'Tis the precept of the Apostle, *Phil.* 2. 3. *In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself*: where we see 'tis the nature of a lowly mind to transfer that esteem to others which he substracts from himself: now where such an esteem is planted in the heart, it verifies all the expressions and outward significations of respect, and renders, the greatest condescentions (which to an insolent humor may seem extravagant and affected) real and unfeigned.

Affability ought to be sincere.

8. On the contrary that Courtesie which derives no higher than from meer human principles, is not much to be confided in. 'Tis the Psalmists affirmation *that all men are liars*: and therefore there is more than a possibility of deceit in their fairest shews. Sometimes we know smooth and plausible addresses have been design'd as the stale to vile and treacherous practices. The extraordinary blandishments and endearing behaviour of *Absalom* to the people, was only to *steal their hearts*, and advance his intended rebellion, 2 *Sam.* 15. 6. and *David* tells us of some, *whose words were softer than butter, having war in the heart, whose words were smoother than oyl, and yet were very swords, Psal.* 55. 21. and God knows this age has not so much improved in sincerity, that we should think the same Scenes are not daily acted over among us.

Else it may be the practice of Absalom to steal hearts, to ill purposes.

9. But besides all the blacker projects of this kind, which nothing but the event can detect, there is a lower sort of this treachery, which is visible, nay so avowed, that it is one of the most common subjects of mirth and entertainment, I mean that of scoffing and derision, a thing too frequent among all, but I fear I may say very peculiarly among Ladies, those at least of the modish sort, their very civilities and caresses being often design'd to gain matter of scorn and laughter. Mutual visits we know are an expression of respect, and should flow from a real kindness, but if those now in use be sifted, how few will be found of that make? They are at the best formal, a tribute rather paid to custom than friendiship, and many go to see those, for whom they are perfectly indifferent whether they find them alive or dead, well or sick. Nay very often they are worse than thus, design'd only to make observations, to bolt out something ridiculous wherewith to sport themselves as soon as they are gone; and lest the Inquest should return with a *non inventus*, they will accept of the slightest discoveries, the least misplacing of a word, nay of a hair shall be theme enough for a Comedy.

There is a barbarous shew of Affability, to expose and deride.

A discipline usually inflicted on Ladies of country breeding.

10. But if a poor Country Gentlewoman fall within their circuit, what a stock of mirth do's she afford them, how curiously do they anatomise every part of her dress, her meen, her dialect, nay perhaps to improve the Scene, will recommend yet greater absurdities to her, under the notion of the Mode, that so she may be the more ample subject of their scorn. Such visits as these are but insidious intrusions, the insinuations of a spy rather than the good office of a neighbour; and when 'tis remembred how great a portion of some womens time is spent in this kind of diversion, we must conclude there have a multitude of acts gone to make up the habit. I wish they would seriously reflect on it, and unravel that injurious mirth by a penitential sadness, and either spend their time better than in visiting, or else direct their visits to better purposes. And this they would certainly do if they would exchange their meer popular civilities (that kind of paint and varnish in manners) for that true Christian condescension, which admits of no deceit, but is as transparent as *Drusus* wish'd his house should be, that has no secret scrues and springs, to move the eyes or tongue a contrary way from the heart, but is in reality all that it pretends to be.

Affability is to be constant.

11. A second property of it is Constancy, for as it is true to others, so it is to its self; 'tis founded on the solidest of Vertues, and is not subject to those light and giddy uncertainties, that the vulgar civilities are. For he that out of a disesteem of his proper worth, has placed himself in a state of inferiority, will think it not an arbitrary matter, but a just debt to pay a respect to those he thinks his betters; and an humble mind will in every body find something or other to prefer to himself. So that he acts upon a fixt principle, and is not in danger of those contradictions in his manners, which shall render him one day sweet and affable, and another sowre and morose. But such mutations are frequently incident to those who are swayed by other motives, sometimes an interest changes, and then the most fauning Sycophant can transplant his flatteries, and court a new Patron, yea many times to the despight and vilifying of the old.

Not altering with the varieties of fortune.

12. Sometimes again, fortune may change; a man may fall from a prosperous to an adverse state, and then those who were prodigal of their civilities whilst he needed nothing else, will withdraw even those from him, lest they should encourage him to demand something more. An experiment of this *Job* made in his friends (or rather flatterers) whom he fitly compares to winter brooks, running over when not needed, but quite dry when they are.

Or of fancy and humor.

13. But the most frequent change is that of fancy and humor, which has a much more general sway than reason and judgment. This is so observable in the vulgar rabble, that often in an instant they will shift passions, and hate this hour what they doted on the last. Of this all popular States have afforded many costly experiments, but we need not go farther than the sacred Story, where we find the Acclamations and *Hosannahs* of the multitude, quickly converted into *crucifie him, crucifie him.* This levity of mind has been observed so incident to women, that 'tis become almost proverbial; for by how much their passions are more violent, they are commonly the less lasting, and as they are reckon'd among those colder bodies, that are particularly influenced by the Moon, so they seem to bear a great resemblance to her in her vicissitudes and changes; yet still with a greater degree of uncertainty: for she in all her revolutions observes some constant periods, and we can tell in her wain when she will be at full, so that she has a kind of certainty even in her planetary errors; but what Ephemerides can be framed for some womens humors? Who can tell how long the present will last? and what will be the next that will succeed?

Or deficiency in the arts of flattery.

14. I need not bring instances of their inconstancy from that common place of passionate widows, who have let a new love sail even through those floods of tears wherewith they bewailed the old. For (besides that, that is a case wherein possibly they may find matter enough for retortion) it is here a little wide from my purpose, which designs no farther inquisition than into their ordinary conversation, wherein that love of variety which is so remarkable in their habit, their diet, their diversions, extends its self often to their company, their friendships also and converse. Those intimacies which they cherish'd lately, quickly grow despicable, and at last nauseous, and consequently their behaviour falls from kind and civil, to cold and disdainful. I doubt not this has often been prov'd by many of those humble companions, which officiously attend them, who cannot always fix themselves, no not by those flatteries that first introduc'd them. Some new comer perhaps has better refined the Art, and do's the same thing more acutely and ingeniously, and then the old one is to be turn'd off as too gross a Sycophant. Or if they have been so happy as to light upon some of a more generous temper, who instead of a servile compliance with their

humor,

humor, and high characters of their worth, entertain them with the true images of themselves, and endeavour to make what others only speak them, this is that unpardonable crime which forfeits all degrees of favour, and do's not only avert, but incense. A faithful Monitor is as unacceptable as a true Looking-glass to a deformed person, which at the best will be set aside, and escapes well if not broken; and while great persons dispense their favours or their frowns by such perverse measures as these, they will be sure to do it unjustly, as well as unconstantly.

15. I am far from making this an universal charge, I know there are women of the highest quality, that guide themselves by other rules, that are deaf to all the songs of *Sirens*, and have the prudence to value a seasonable reproof before the most extravagant Panegyrick: but this is owing to that Humility which I am now recommending, without which 'tis as impossible for greatness to be proof against flattery, as it is for a Pinnace with spreading sails, and a violent gust of wind, to sail steadily without ballast. And the frequent want of this is it which makes it no less frequent to see those unevennesses and inequalities in behaviour; those partialities in dispensing even the commonest civilites, which I have now represented.

Humility is the best preservative against flattery.

16. And sure 'tis none of the meanest attributes due to that excellent vertue of Humility that it can thus fix and poise the mind, cure those vertigo's and giddy humors, incident to those who are mounted aloft: and above all, that it is a sure antidote against the most insinuating poison of Flattery, an holy spell or amulet against the venom of a Parasite, which the Philosopher justly calls the worst of tame beasts, as a Detractor is of wild: He being indeed a kind of vulture, in the way of seizure no less than ravine, who first picks out the eyes of that which he designs to prey upon, suffering not the person concern'd, to see any thing of that destruction which he is to feel. And certainly none of the ominous birds, no night-raven or screech-owl can abode half so dismally as these domestick birds of prey, which are not only presages, but instruments of ruin wheresoever they haunt.

That vulture vice that picks out first the eyes of the creature design'd for a prey.

17. 'Tis therefore the universal concern of those that are great and prosperous to chase them away, as *Abraham* did the Fowls from his Sacrifice, *Gen.* 15. 11. but yet more peculiarly so of those to whom fortune has given a sudden rise and unexpected grandeur, they being of all others the most obnoxious to this sort of Harpies. The surprizes of prosperity do no less disturb the judgment than those of Adversity: and as one who is in an instant snatch'd up to some high Tower, is so amazed to see himself there, that he has no just measure of the altitude, but thinks every thing farther below him than it is: so they that ascend to greatness by swift and rapid motions, have their heads so turned, that they are apt to overvalue it, and to look with contempt on those who before perhaps they thought worth their envy. And on a mind thus prepared, flattery may make any impressions, it suborning even Providence as a witness on its side, and inferring from the Dignities obtain'd, the transcending merit of the obtainer: a piece of Sophistry which the slightest observer may easily confute, all Ages giving instances of those whose Vices have preferr'd them, and by a strange Chymistry have extracted Honour out of infamous acts. Yet to a mind possest with its own admiration, this shall pass for a demonstration: so treacherous a thing is Pride, that it combines with all who design to cheat us. And indeed 'tis not only an accessary, but the principal; none being in danger by others flatteries, who are not first seduced by their own.

They who come to unexpected greatness are most obnoxious to flattery.

18. It will therefore be a point of Wisdom for all Persons of Honour to increase their caution with their fortune; and as they multiply their Retinues without, so especially to enforce their Guard within, that they become not slaves to their own Greatness, fix not themselves in such a posture of State, as to become immovable to all the offices of Humanity and Civility; nor think that their admission to Greatness is upon the same terms on which the Jews were wont to receive their Proselytes, that they must renounce all their former relations; but to remember that they differ no more from others than as a counter set in the place of thousands or hundreds, do's from one set in the place of tens or units. A little transposition may quite alter the case; or however when they are all taken off the score, they are then indiscriminately tumbled together, and one has no precedence of another, either in place or value. So undiscernable will be the difference between the greatest Queen, and the meanest Servant, when Death that great Leveller, shall have mixt them; there will be no inquisition in the Grave who came embalm'd, or perfum'd thither; And, as a Learned man says, the Ulcers of *Lazarus* will make as good dust as the Paint of *Jezebel*.

They who are advanc'd, ought to increase their caution with their fortune.

And above all remember their end.

19. But I shall be thought to have out-run my Subject, or instead of that amiable Image of Affability and universal Obligingness, the great Ornament of Life, introduce the grim figure of Death, that sullen Executioner, whom no Gifts, no Prayers can mollifie. Yet I cannot yield it wholly impertinent; for, as its final stroke cures all the infirmities of the body, so the foresight and contemplation of it is as much a Catholicon for all the maladies of the mind; especially that of Insolence and Disdain. For sure they cannot much pride themselves in any exaltation, that remember they must finally fall into the dust: nor arrogantly despise others, who consider that themselves shall one day be insulted over by worms and insects. Such mental descents into the vault or charnel-house, are the best disciplines for the demeanor in other places, according to the admonition of the Wise man, *Remember thy end, and thou shalt never do amiss.*

SECT. V.

Of Piety.

The supreme feminine vertue is Piety and Devotion.

1. LASTLY, To compleat and crown all other Excellencies, nothing is so proper, so necessary as Piety and Devotion. This is the salt which seasons all Sacrifices; yea, the Altar which sanctifies the Gift, no good (how splendid soever in the sight of man) being acceptable to God, till it be thus consecrated, and have this seal of the Sanctuary upon it. This is a Vertue truly Divine, as well in its original as its end; for as it comes from Heaven, (is an afflation of the blessed Spirit) so it tends thither also, and thither raises its Votaries. This is it which sublimates and spiritualizes Humanity, defecates and refines it from all the dregs of mortality, and so wings our earthly lumpish nature, that we can soar aloft to the region of spirits, and by its raptures make some essay of that state of separation, even while we are linked to the body. This is it which combines us so with God, that we have the same interests, the same choices; nay it do's in a sort communicate and interchange properties with him; the all-Powerful God seems impotent and unable to resist its influence, whilst it invests us feeble wretches in a kind of Omnipotence, by ingaging him for us who can do all things.

Piety in its utmost extent, includes all duty.

2. Now this Piety may be consider'd either in a larger, or more limited sense: in the former 'tis as wide as the whole scheme of Duty, not confin'd to any one act, but extended to all the commands of God. For as the animal Spirit diffuses its self into all the most distant members of the body; so this more vital Principle has as universal an influence on the mind, stamps that with such an admiration and reverence of God, such a love and complacency in him, that every act is (at least habitually) design'd to obey and glorifie him.

More properly it means the acts of adoration and worship.

3. In the more limited sense, Piety is taken for our more immediate entercourse with God, in things purely divine, as Adorations, Prayers, Aspirations, and all pantings and breathings of the soul after him; and in this notion 'tis more particularly call'd Devotion. And this is comprehended in the other, as a part in the whole; nay indeed, as an effect in its cause; for where Piety has not first form'd and modell'd the soul, there can be no true Devotion. External forms of it there may be, but that is but ceremony and pageantry, the most submissive prostrations are there but like that of *Dagon* before the Ark, the fall of a lifeless trunk; the most elevated eyes but a kind of convulsive motion, and the most rigid mortifications, but like the cuttings and launcings of *Baal*'s Priests. Of this the very Heathen had some notion, and therefore in their worships had many preparatory ceremonies of lustration and purifying, as being conscious of the incongruity, that unholy Persons should be admitted to Sacred things. And accordingly *Socrates* has excellently (I had almost said Evangelically) defin'd, *the best way of worshipping God*, to be *the doing what he commands*. Indeed without this, our Devotion is meer stratagem and design: we invoke God as we use to cajole men, only to serve a present turn; and of such disingenuous addresses, 'tis easy to read the event, or if we cannot, *Solomon* will instruct us; *Prov.* 15. 8. *The Prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.*

4. To

4. To treat of the several branches of Piety in the first notion, is not agreeable to the intended brevity of this Treatise; nor necessary, because there are so many distinct Tracts extant on that Subject; yet I shall the more closely to adapt it to my female Readers, observe the propriety of it to women, not only as it is their greatest ornament and advantage, but especially as they have somewhat more of predisposition towards it in their native temper. God's Laws, which are the rule of Piety, have this common with mens, that they are inforced upon us by the proposals both of Punishments and Rewards, by that means engaging two of our most sensible passions, Fear and Love; and the female Sex being eminent for the pungency of both these, they are consequently the better prepared for the impressions of Religion.

The advantages of the female Sex by the prevalence of the passions of fear and love.

5. This is so much acknowledg'd, that our masculine Atheists make an ill use of it, and are willing to think that Religion ow's its force only to the impotence of the subject on which it works, that 'tis only an imposition upon the easy credulity of women, and are content to allow them the inclosure of it: wherein, though they sufficiently shew their contempt of Piety, yet they unawares give a greater honour to that Sex than they intend, whilst they confess it more capable of an assimilation to the supreme Goodness, and of the renewal of God's Image (for to that all Piety is design'd) than their own. And therefore women have so little reason to be asham'd, that they ought to glory in the concession, and gratefully to celebrate the goodness of God to them, who, as he brings light out of darkness, so converts their natural infirmities into a means of spiritual strength, makes the impotencies and defects of their nature subservient to the operation of Grace; and by consecrating their very Passions, makes even those Gibeonites serviceable to the Tabernacle. But then 'tis to be remembred, that the greater is their obligation to comply with this design of Gods, to let their passions run in the channel he has cut for them; so to confine their Fear and Love to spiritual Objects, that they make no inordinate eruptions to any thing else, but in all their estimations of things dreadful or desirable, to give still the just deference to that which is eternal.

Fear is pretended to be the first mover in religion.

6. And, as Women in General have this advantage towards Piety, and obligation to it; so particularly those of Quality, who we may suppose to have generally a more early institution and instruction in it than those of a meaner rank: and besides, have afterwards more opportunities of being built up in the knowledge of their duty, and (by the help of an ingenuous education) clearer apprehensions to discern it; and when they do so, have greater obligations to perform it, both in respect of God, of others, and themselves.

Women of quality have a particular obligation to Piety from the advantages of institution

7. In respect of God they have the greatest tie of gratitude, not only for the common mercies which they partake with the rest of mankind, but for those peculiar, by which they are differenc'd from others; of which, if they want a just value, let them ask themselves how willing they would be to part with them, how she that has fed delicately, would like to be desolate in the street, or *she that has been brought up in Scarlet, to embrace the Dunghill, Lam.* 4. 5. and according to the aversion they find to such a change, let them estimate their present enjoyment, and the thankfulness it exacts.

As also for their liberal portion of worldly goods.

8. Secondly, in regard of others, their Piety back'd with their secular advantages, may be of a more extensive benefit; they have many opportunities of doing good by their influence on others; or if no way else, yet the splendor of their example, will by the eminency of their conditions shine (as a light on some high Tower) more perspicuously, and guide many into the same path of Vertue. And certainly 'tis no small obligation that lies on them in this respect; for God, who do's nothing without an end worthy of his Wisdom, can never be thought to have selected some persons as the objects of his bounty, meerly that they may swill and glut themselves with sensual pleasures. No doubtless, he that is the great Master of the Universe, disposes all things for common benefit; and therefore, if He have placed some in an higher Orb than others, it is that they may have an auspicious influence on those below them; and if they fail in this, they are no longer Stars but Comets, things of ominous and unlucky abode to all about them. I might enlarge on this Subject, but having done it already in the Gentlemans Calling, I suppose it unnecessary; since that part is equally adapted to both Sexes.

As also for their advantages of doing good to others

9. In the last place, they have all obligation to Piety, in respect of themselves, and that in two considerations; the first, of their present danger; the second, of their final account. For their danger, 'tis evident they do not more out-number their inferiors in any thing than in the opportunities, nay sollicitations to sin. Wealth and Honour have many snares, and which is worse, do often dispose the mind to

Likewise for their greater temptations.

such an heedless security, that it takes no care to avoid them: and as in the body, the diseases of repletion are far more numerous than those of emptiness, so the mind is oftner vitiated by Affluence and Prosperity, than by Indigence and Adversity. It becomes therefore those who are so surrounded with enemies to fortifie themselves: and that they can no way do, but by a sincere Piety, that *whole Armour of God* which the Apostle describes, *Eph. 6. 13. by which alone they may repel all the darts of temptations*; nay not only ward the blow, but wrest the weapon out of Satans hand, so that when he urges to them the opportunities, the impunity which their wealth and greatness gives them to be had, they may retort his argument, and by a wholsomer inference collect thence their great obligation to be good; and that not only upon the score of Gratitude (though that were enough to an ingenious soul) but in the second place of Interest also, in respect of that account they must finally give. For though God be not an unjust exactor to reap where he has not sowed, yet he is not so negligently profuse, as to do that which no prudent man will do, scatter his goods promiscuously, without taking notice where they fall; but as he dispences all things by a particular Providence, so he do's it to a particular end, and will exact as particular an account how that end has been complied with.

And larger final account.

10. It is a smart exprobation of Gods to *Israel*, *Ezek.* 16. 17, 18, 19. that she had sacrilegiously employed his *silver and gold, his oyl, his flour and hony which he had given her in the service of her Idols*, by which as we may see he takes notice how we dispose of our temporal possessions, so it shews us how the enditement will proceed against all those who so pervert their use. With what confusion must they appear at the great Audit who can give no other account of their receits, but that they consumed them upon their lusts, waged war against God with his own treasure, and been as well thieves as rebels? What a Luciferian fall will they have from their honours, who have endeavour'd to undermine Gods? thought themselves too great to pay him homage, and by their profane and vicious example, induced a contempt of him. In short, what a retaliation of inversions will there then be? those that have turn'd Grace into wantonness, converted his bounty into the fuel of their pride and luxury, shall then have their glory turn'd into shame, their riots and excesses into the want of a drop of water, and shall retain nothing of their greatness, but the guilt, the grating remembrance of having abused those temporal blessings, which if well managed, might have received them into everlasting habitations. How necessary then is it for all who have receiv'd so much upon account, to be often reflecting on it, examining what charges the great owner has impos'd upon so ample an income? what God requires of them for whom he hath done so much? And this is particularly the business of Piety, which in all the foremention'd respects, is as the usefullest, so the noblest accomplishment of greatness.

'Tis the mastery of this age that Religion is thought an abject contemptible thing.

11. And such it hath been accounted till this profane Age of ours, which has remov'd all the boundaries of the former, reverst even the instincts of nature, and will not leave us so much of Religion as had the very worst of Heathens. For how erroneous soever they were in the choice of their Deities, they always honour'd and reverenc'd those they chose, committed most of their enormities in obedience, not in affront to them: did not assign them votaries as *Jeroboam* did his Priests of the meanest of the people, but thought themselves dignified by their service, and esteem'd it an infamy not to be pious. But alas now adays we make other estimates, Religion is so abject, so contemptible a thing, as is thought fit to influence none that are great either in parts or quality: and therefore though too many are willing to appropriate it to women, upon the first account, *as the Gospel is the foolishness of preaching*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 21. yet they make exceptions upon the latter, and are not willing to afford it any of the nobler Proselytes even of that Sex.

The patrons of Atheism wanting the support of reason, are studious to abet their party by the authority of great persons.

12. I doubt not there are many Lectures read to such, to fortifie them against all impressions of Piety, to raze out the common notion of a God, and in order that to depose his Vicegerent within them, discard their conscience, that unmannerly inmate, which is still speaking what they have no mind to hear, and will be apt sometimes to question their grand principle, and tell them they have souls. And truly 'tis no wonder if the abetters of Atheism take this course; for since they have no solid foundation of truth or reason, 'tis but necessary they support their Party by Authority; the countenance and applause of great Persons, and God knows they have too much succeeded in the design. But, in the mean time, what security do they give for the truth of their pretensions? We know 'tis still required of those that will practice upon other peoples concerns, that they put in caution to secure the owner from damage. But alas, what gage can they give for a soul? Who can contrive a form of Indemnity where that is the thing hazarded?

13. 'Tis

13. 'Tis easy indeed for one of these Apostles of *Satan*, to tell a Lady that she has nothing to do but to indulge to her pleasure; that 'tis the extreamest folly to be frighted from a present enjoyment, by a fear of I know not what future smart; that God, and Sin, and Hell, are but names, certain Mormos and Bug-bears conjur'd up by Divines, to work upon her fear, and abuse her credulity. This, and much more of this kind may be said, and I doubt often is; but all this while the question is begg'd, and a strong affirmation must pass for proof: for I defie all the Doctors of Atheism to make any demonstration of their Tenet; and yet, though they pretend to no demonstration themselves, Religion must be condemned meerly for the want of it: that is for not making spiritual things liable to sense, for distinguishing between Belief and Science; which is indeed for doing the most reasonable thing in the world, *viz*. the remitting every object to the trial of its proper faculty: and they who suspect it upon that account, may by the same kind of Logick wrangle us out of all our senses, may perswade us we hear nothing because the eye discerns not sounds, that we taste not, because the ear understands not gusts and sapors and so on to the rest.

Also by sensual topicks, and bold assertings.

14. And yet this is the bottom of those Arguments which the great pretenders to Reason make against Religion; and in the mean time have so little ingenuity as to exclaim on the light credulity of fools and women, that embrace the dictates of faith, whilst at the same instant they exact a more implicit assent to their negative Articles, their no Religion. A strange magisterial confidence so to impose on this Age, what is so universally contradictory to all former, and to the common verdict of mankind. For 'tis observable through all the successions of men, that there were never any society, any collective body of Atheists. A single one perhaps might here and there be found (as we see sometimes monsters or mis-shapen births) but for the generality they had always such instincts of a Deity, that they never thought they ran far enough from Atheism; but rather chose to multiply their Gods, to have too many than none at all: nay were apt to descend to the adoration of things below themselves, rather than to renounce the power above them. By which we may see that the notion of a God is the most indelible character of natural Reason; and therefore whatever pretence our Atheists make to ratiocination and deep discourse, it is none of that primitive fundamental reason coetaneous with our humanity; but is indeed a reason fit only for those who own themselves like the beasts that perish.

They who decry the weakness of believing, at the instant expect an implicit assent to their dictates.

15. But admit we could be more bountiful to them, and allow their opinion an equal probability with our Faith, yet even this could never justifie any body in point of Prudence, that should adhere to them. Common discretion teaches us that where two propositions have an equal appearance of truth, there is no rational inducement to prefer one before the other, till we have examin'd the consequences, and find something in the one which may over-poise and outweigh the contrary. Now in all things that concern practice, there are no motives so considerable, either to invite or avert, as Advantage or Danger.

The tenets of Atheists if probable in any degree; cannot be safe.

16. Let us apply this to the present case, and examine the pretensions of the Atheist and the Christian in both respects. But first we are to remember, that both Advantage and Danger are to be viewed under a double notion, either as present or as future. The former is the Atheists most proper subject, and indeed all he can pertinently speak to, who professes himself only a man of this world. Here he will tell us that the disbelief of God and another life, is the great enfranchiser of mankind, sets us at liberty from that thraldom, those Bonds wherewith our superstitious fears had fetter'd us, that it supersedes all those nice and perplexing inquiries of lawful and unlawful, and reduces all our inquisitions only to this one, how we shall most please our selves. The glutton need not put a knife to his throat, but is only to put an edge upon his palate. The drunkard need not refrain his cups, but only take care that they be filled with the most delicious liquor. The wanton need not pull out his eye, but only contrive to possess what that tempts him to desire; and in a word none of our appetites need be restrain'd, but satisfied. And this uncontrol'd licentiousness, this brutish liberty, is that *summum bonum*, that supream happiness which they propose to themselves, and to which they invite others.

A parallel of the interests of the Atheist.

17. On the other side the Christian is not without his claim to a present advantage, though of a far differing nature: he is not so preposterous as to think it a preferment to sink below his kind; to aspire to an assimilation with meer animals, which is the utmost the former amounts to, but he proposes to himself the satisfaction of a man; those delights which may entertain his Reason not his Sense, which consist in the rectitude of a well-inform'd Mind. His Religion is the perfected Scheme of

And the pious.

Morality, and makes him a Philosopher without the help of the Schools, it teaches him the art of subduing his appetites, calming his passions, and in a word makes him Lord of himself; and by that gives him all the pleasures which result from such a Soveraignty. Nor is he totally void even of the pleasures of sense, which in many instances are greater to him than to those that most court them. Temperance cooks his coursest diet to a greater gust, than all their studied mixtures; Chastity makes one lawful embrace more grateful to him, than all the nauseating variety of their unbounded lusts; and Contentment swells his mite into a talent, makes him richer than the *Indies* would do if he desired beyond them. Nor is it a contemptible benefit that his Moderation gives him an immunity from those sensitive pains which oft bring up the rear of inordinate sensual pleasures. So that his condition even set in the worst light, in that very particular wherein the Atheist most triumphs over him, is not so deplorable as 'tis represented.

The advantage of the pious in respect of pleasure.

18. But if it were, he has pleasures that would infinitely overwhelm that smart, and that not only in his reason (as hath been said before) but in his more sublime diviner part, such irradiations from above, such antepasts of his future bliss, such acquiescence in a calm and serene conscience, as is very cheaply bought with all he can suffer here. I know the profane laugh at these things as Chimera's and the illusions of a prepossess'd fancy (and truly if they were so, they might yet come in balance with many of their pleasures which are as much owing to opinion and imagination:) but if we consider what supports they have given under the heaviest pressures, how they enabled the primitive Martyrs, not only to suffer, but even to court all that is formidable to human nature, we cannot think that a meer phantastick imaginary joy could deceive the sense of such real, such acute torments. And though in this great declination of Zeal, there be perhaps few that can pretend to those higher degrees of spiritual raptures, yet certainly were the votes of all devout persons collected, they would all concur in this testimony, that even in the common offices of Piety, the ordinary discharge of a good Conscience, there is an infinitely greater complacence, a higher gust and relish than in all the pleasures of Sense. But of this the most irrefragable witnesses are those who from great voluptuaries have turn'd devotees; and I dare appeal to their experience, whether of the two states is the most pleasant. I wish those who will not believe this on others words, would themselves make the trial, and till they do so they are notoriously unjust to pronounce that a fiction, of whose reality they refuse to make proof.

On the account of Eternity.

19. But what hath been said, some estimate may be made which bids fairest (the Atheist or Christian) as to present temporal felicity: but alas what an allay, what a damp is it to felicity to say 'tis temporal; yet we may give it a term below that, and say 'tis momentary. For since our life is so, nothing that depends on that can be otherwise, and yet in this shallow bottom the irreligious embark their all. For, as to all future advantage, 'tis their Principle to disclaim it, they discern *no reward for blameless souls*, *Wisd.* 2. 22. So that in this particular the Christian do's not compare with, but triumph over them. *He knows that if his earthly house of this Tabernacle be dissolv'd, he hath a building of God; an House not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens*, 2 *Cor.* 5. 1. That when he parts with his life, he do's not resign his happiness, but shall receive it infinitely improv'd both in degree and duration. And now certainly 'tis visible enough which opinion proposes the fairer hopes, and consequently which (supposing but an equal probability of truth) is the most inviting.

The parallel between the future prospects of the Atheist and Pious.

20. But some spirits there are so ignoble, that the most glorious Prize cannot animate them; that like a swine, the muscles of whose eyes, they say, permit him not to look upwards, is not concerned in all the felicities above, but would at a venture resign his share in those, so he may securely enjoy his husk and draff. But yet even those who are uncapable of the more generous resentments, may be apt enough to the more servile; and danger may fright, though glory cannot allure them. It concerns such therefore to compare the mischiefs which each Opinion threatens to their opposits, and from thence make an estimate which is safest to be chosen. And here let the Atheist himself cast up the account of the dangers consequent to Christianity, and it can all amount but to this, the deprivation (or rather moderation) of some present sensual Pleasures, or the incurring of some present sensitive Pains; the former in the daily exercise of Temperance, and Mortification; the latter, (more rarely and oftner in purpose than act) the suffering for Righteousness sake. And both these the Christian ballances, nay out-weighs by two more important present hazards on the other side. To the former, he opposes the danger of being enslav'd to the brutish part of a mans self, a thing so deplorable even

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in the judgment of humanity, that all Writers of Ethicks have uniformly declar'd no servility to be so sordid and intolerable, as that of the vicious man to his Passions and Lusts. To the latter, he confronts the mischief of being a slave to every man else; for such he certainly is, whom the fear of suffering can baffle out of any thing he thinks just and honest. For if all the men in the World could successively have the power to afflict him, they would also have to command and rule him; and what can be more abject, more below the dignity of human nature, than to have a spirit always prepar'd for such a servitude? Besides, even the utmost sufferings which Christianity can at any time require, is outvied daily by the effects of Luxury and Rage; and for one that has opportunity to be a Martyr for his God, thousands become so to their Vices.

And the manifest advantage of the pious.

21. If from the present we look forward to future dangers, the Atheist must here be perfectly silent; he cannot say that the Christian after this life shall be in any worse estate than himself, since he concludes they shall both be the same nothing: but the Christian threatens him with a more dismal state. He allows him indeed a being, yea an eternal one; but it is only such as qualifies him for a misery as eternal; the worm that never dies, the fire unquenchable, where all the excesses of his short Pleasures shall be reveng'd with more excessive, endless Torments: his senses which were here the only Organs of his felicity, shall then be (though not the only) the very sensible mediums of his wretchedness; and that Conscience which he here suspended from its office, shall then take out its arrears, and return all its stifled admonitions in perpetual horrors, and desperate upbraidings. I need not now sure ask on which side the greater danger lies.

If common prudence be appeal'd to, in like secular circumstances the Atheist would determine against himself.

22. To conclude, the result of all is, that the transitory Pleasures of the Atheist are over-poised even by the present Satisfactions of the Pious. And the eternity of unbounded, unconceivable joys he expects hereafter comes in *ex abundanti*, having nothing on the other side that offers at a competition with it. And at the very same rate of Proportion we have seen the dangers also are so, that we can easily compute the utmost mischief our Christianity can do us, if it should be false; but the damage of the other is inestimable, both for the penalty of Loss and Sense. I may now appeal to common Prudence to judge of the vast inequality, and to pronounce, that sure there had need be some great evidence of truth on the Atheists side, to preponderate all these disadvantages. Indeed, nothing much below a demonstration can justify the choice of so dangerous Principles; I am sure an equal probability can never do it, where the danger is so unequal; and were the veriest Atheist consulted in a secular case of the like circumstances, he would certainly pronounce him a mad man that should make such an election. How desperate a phrensy then is it to do it, without so much as that equal probability: nay indeed, without any probability at all? And yet this madness sets up for the monopoly not of Wit only, but Reason too; and by confidence and clamor, seeks to run down those Arguments it can never confute.

The precedent digression, necessary for persons of quality, who are engaged in promiscuous conversation.

23. I may be thought here to have made too long a digression from my proper Subject, but I cannot confess it so; for since my present business is to recommend Piety, I can no way do that so effectually as by shewing its consonancy to right reason, especially considering the busie industry now used to represent it under another form, and to alienate from it those persons whose Greatness may give it any lustre or repute in the World; of which sort I suppose there are few more frequently attacked than Women of Quality, that converse among those who call themselves the Wits of the Age; who living in so infectious an air, had need of some antidotes about them; and if what I have now offered, appear not forcible enough, (for it pretends not to the tithe of what may be said on the Subject) yet it may at least do them this service, to put them in mind of what they need, and send them to the fuller dispensatories of others.

'Tis the Atheists grand maxim that none who professes Divinity should be consulted with.

24. And that is the thing I should earnestly beg of them, that they would be so just to their own interest, as not to combine with seducers against themselves; but if they have been so unhappy as to lend one ear to them, yet at least not to give up both to be forc'd in a slavish submission to their dictates, but hear what may be said on the other side. And sure 'tis but a low composition for God thus to divide with *Satan*, yet 'tis that of which his Emissaries are so jealous that 'tis one of their grand Maxims, that none who professes Divinity is to be advis'd with; and therefore by all Arts they are to be rendred either ridiculous, or suspected; to which methinks may be applied that Fable (which *Demosthenes* once recited to the *Athenians*, when *Alexander* demanded of them to deliver up their Orators) of the Wolves and

the Sheep, who coming to a Treaty, the first Article of the Wolves was, that the Sheep should give up their Mastives which guarded them: the resemblance is too obvious to need a minute application.

A proposal which is judg'd most unreasonable in all other instances.

25. But this is manifestly to reverse all former Rules, and to trust a man rather in any Faculty than his own, and would never have prevail'd in any thing but where the soul is concern'd, that poor despicable thing whereon alone we think fit to make experiments. 'Tis sure, that if any should dispute their title to an earthly Possession, they would not so tamely resign it, nor would trust their own selves in its defence, but would consult their ablest Lawyers, and, by them, sift out every circumstance that might establish their claim. Why should they then suffer themselves to be talk'd out of an Heavenly Inheritance, without so much as once proposing their doubts to those whose study and profession it is to resolve them? But as in all other ills, so in this, prevention is better than cure; and therefore to those that are yet untainted, the securest course will be to stop both ears against all profane insinuations, and to use those who tempt them to be disloyal to their God, that spiritual adultery, as they should do those who solicite them to the carnal, not so much as to enter parly, but with the greatest indignation detest and reject them. 'Tis the saying of the Wise man, *Prov.* 25. 23. that *an angry countenance driveth away a back biting tongue.* And certainly, would great Persons look severely on such defamers of Religion, they would give some check to that impudence of profaneness which has given it such a vogue in the World.

We should think it disingenious to sit unconcern'd when a friend or benefactor is reviled, and must have little value for God and religion if we can hear them traduc'd.

26. And sure this is much their Duty to do, if they own any relation to that God who is so dishonored. They would think it a very disingenious thing to sit by to hear a Friend or Benefactor reviled, and express no displeasure; and is God so friendless among them, that only his traducers and blasphemers can be patiently heard? Among the Jews, at the hearing of any Blaspehmy, they rent their cloaths; but I fear we have some of our nice Dames that would be much more concern'd at a rip in their garment, than at the rending and violating God's Sacred Name; and could more patiently behold the total subversion of Religion, than the disorder or misplacing of a lock or riband. But 'tis to be hoped there are not many so impious, and those that are not, will surely think themselves oblig'd with all their power, to discountenance all the Fautors of irreligion, whether they be the solemn sedater sort that would argue, or the jollier that would rally them out of their Faith.

The second notion of Piety relates to practick duty.

27. But when they have thus provided against the assaults of others, and secur'd the speculative part of Religion, they have only establish'd a Judicatory against themselves, stor'd up matter of Conviction and Accusation, if they answer it not in the practick. I must therefore after this long excursion, return to my first Point, and beseech them seriously to weigh the obligations they have to Piety in the general nonotion of it, as it comprehends all the duties of a Christian life; of which as I intend not to speak particularly, so I know not where to find a better summary, than that which St. *James* has drawn up, chap 1. verse 27. *Pure Religion and undefiled before God even the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

The acts of worship or devotion which the female Sex has great propriety in.

28. But besides this general, there is (as I said before) another more restrain'd notion of Piety, as it relates to our more immediate entercourse with God in divine Ordinances and Worship, in which respect it commonly passes under the name of Devotion, and thus consider'd it has a great propriety to the female Sex. For Devotion is a tender Plant, that will scarce root in stiff or rocky ground, but requires a supple gentle soil, and therefore the feminine softness and pliableness is very apt and proper for it. And accordingly there have been very eminent growths of it in that Sex. I need not heap up examples of former Ages, but rather perswade this to leave some at least to the following; and the more considerable the persons are, the more conspicuous will be the Example, which seems the more to adapt it to those I now speak to. Devotion in a Cloister is as recluse as the Votary, a light rather under a bushel than on a candlestick: and in an obscure Cottage 'tis either not observ'd, or else thought to be but the effect of destitution and secular wants, a reserve rather than a choice: but when those who are in the eye of the world, the most eminent Actors on the Theater of human life, shall chuse the part of a Saint, when those who want none of the divertisments or blandishments of earth, shall have their conversation in Heaven, this recommends it to the Spectators, as the true and greatest object of human choice; since 'tis chosen by those who know the utmost pretence of all its competitors.

29. Nor

29. Nor is devotion only more excellent in them in regard of its effects, but 'tis also more necessary in respect of their obligation. Devotion is an abstraction from the world, and therefore cannot in any eminent degrees, be practised by those whose necessities or business do much entangle them in it. So that from such, a far less proportion will be accepted, than from those, whose plenty and ease give them no other want but that of employment. And certainly if there be any of whom that can truly be said; women of quality are the persons: for they in this respect exceed even men of the like rank: for the men are often engag'd in publick employments, and must lend most of their time to the use of others; or however all have the care of their own private affairs, the managery of their fortunes to employ them. But of women the utmost that is ordinarily requir'd, is but a little easie inspection within their own walls, the oversight of a few children, and servants, and even from this how many are by their condition of life exempted; and how many more do by their niceness and delicacy exempt themselves? And surely so perfect a vacancy is neither happy nor safe. And therefore God who projects we should be both, never design'd it for any of mankind: but where he gives so much liberty from secular, he expects a greater diligence in spiritual employments.

Women of quality have few secular avocations.

30. And indeed 'tis an amazing thing to see, that any into whom he has breath'd the breath of life, on whom he has stamp'd the image of his own eternity, can think those immortal souls were given them only to serve the mean and abject uses of their corruptible bodies, (for which the soul of the dullest Animal would have done as well;) that eating and drinking, sleep and recreations, which are only useful to the supporting us in this world, are the only things for which we were sent hither. And yet if we may measure their opinions by their practice, this seems to be the perswasion of many of our female Gentry, who look upon it as a degrading, a kind of attainder of their blood, to do any thing but please their senses. An error sure of the most pernicious consequence imaginable. We know a Lady of pleasure is in one sense a very scandalous Epithet, and truly 'tis no very laudable one in the other, nay which is worse, they are often coincident, and fall in with each other. She whose sole universal aim is pleasure, will not think her self much out of her road, in the pursuit of any particular. And she that thinks she lives for no other purpose, will so often be at a loss for innocent pleasure, that she is almost under a necessity to call in the nocent, to serve the very end (as she supposes) of her being. But indeed were they sure to confine themselves to such as are harmless in their kind, yet the excess of them renders them sinful, and the doting pursuit denominates them *lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of God*, a character so black that the Apostle compleats his Catalogue of the worst vices of the worst times with it, 1 *Tim.* 3. 4.

'Tis an amazing prospect to see souls born for immortality pursuing the uses of the body.

31. It is therefore the great goodness of God to design a rescue for those whose condition exposes them to that danger, and by exacting a liberal expence of time in their devotion, divert them from lavishing both it and their souls together. Neither do's he by this defeat their aim of a pleasant life, but rather assist it: for whereas sensual delights are vagrant, and must be chased through a hundred turnings and wild Mazes, the spiritual are fixt, and one may always know where to find them. How often are the voluptuous in pain to know which pleasure to choose? like a surfeited stomack the greater variety is set before it, the more it nauseats all. What difficulties hath a Lady many times to resolve whether an afternoon shall be spent at the Court, or at the Theater; whether in dancing or at cards, in giving or receiving visits, as not knowing which will best please her? But she that knows the delights of Devotion, knows withal that there is no other fit to come in competition with it; and so is not distracted in her choice, nor need go farther then her Closet for the most agreeable entertainment. I know this will sound a little incredible to those that know no other use of Closets than as a conservatory of gauds and baubles; that aspire to no pleasure there above that of children, the playing with the Pictures and Puppets that adorn it. Nor indeed do I pretend that such shall find those satisfactions I speak of. Those whose errand is to *Beelzebub* the God of flies, must not expect to be treated by the God of *Israel*. An ingenuous man will scorn to obtrude himself on those who desire not his company, and sure God will not make himself more cheap. Those that will meet him in their Closets, must come with that design, resort thither as to an Oratory; nay more than so, they must come frequently. Spiritual joys know not the way to a place where they are not often invited: and as men seek for each other not in places where they seldom or never come, but where they daily frequent; so God contrives, not to meet us in that place where we appear rarely and accidentally, but where we usually resort.

Spiritual pleasures would be more entertaining as well as more noble.

Of publick devotion to which that of the closet must prepare.

32. I shall not need to branch out devotion into the several parts, that being done already in a multitude of other Treatises, of which if they please to consult any one, they cannot want a Directory for their worship, whether private or publick. Only let me observe the order and connexion of those two, that they are neither to be sever'd nor yet to be rang'd preposterously. The private must not justle out the publick, for God expects his solemn homage: and their hudling it up in private, as it may give men ground to suspect they pay none at all; so neither God nor man can collect any thing better from it, than that they are asham'd of the Deity they pretend to serve. On the other side the publick must as little swallow up the private, and where it do's, there may be a just doubt of its sincerity. Many attractives there may be to Church besides that of Piety, and indeed where that is really the motive, it teaches so much reverence to that awful presence they are to approach, as not to come without some preparation. What solicitude, what critical nicenes will a Lady have for her dress, when she is to appear at a solemn meeting at Court, and shall she take no care how sordidly, how undecently she appear when the King of Kings gives audience? Shall many hours, days, nay perhaps weeks, be taken up in contriving for the one, and shall there never be a minute allotted for the other? This were sure very unequal, and yet this is the case where the devotion of the Closet do's not prepare for that of the Church. If the mind be not first tun'd there, it will be very ill qualified for that harmony of souls, which is the only thing God regards in our publick offices. So that were there no other use of private devotion, but as it relates to the publick, that were enough to speak the necessity of it.

As also for civil commerce.

33. But indeed 'tis not only a needful preparative to that sacred commerce, but to our civil. The World is but a larger sort of Pesthouse, in every corner of it we meet with infectious airs, and those that converse in it had need of this Antidote. How many temptations do's every place, every hour, every interview, present to the shocking even of that moral integrity which a sober Heathen would judge fit to preserve; much more of that strict Piety our Christianity exacts?

Origen's miscarriage was preceded by the neglect of prayer.

34. 'Twas the observation that *Origen* made of himself, that the day in which he so shamefully fell by sacrificing to Idols, he had ventur'd out in the morning before he had compleated his usual prayers; the Devil finding him so unarm'd took advantage to assault him, as knowing he had then but a single impotent man to wrestle with, who had forfeited, by not invoking, the protection of God. And indeed since prayer is the most powerful exorcism to eject him, we may well conclude, the omission of it is a likely means to invite him: for if God have not the prepossession, if we do not by hearty prayer surrender our souls to him in the morning, they are then all the day after like that empty house mention'd in the Gospel, a fit receptacle for as many evil spirits as please to inhabit there. Nor are these spiritual the only dangers that attend us, we are liable to a multitude of secular ones also: our persons, our fortunes, our reputations, every thing wherein we can receive a benefit, renders us equally capable of a prejudice. What multitudes of accidents are there to which we lie open, and nothing to guard us from them but the divine Providence? which if we neglect to solicit we are sure very unworthy of its defence. And this is a consideration that methinks should bring even the most sensual persons upon their knees: for though too many may be found that despise the former danger, and can contentedly enough expose their souls, yet such are usually the most tender of their temporal concerns, it being commonly the excessive love of those which makes them neglect the other. She that fears not the fall into sin, will yet fear the tumbling into a precipice, and though she care not for the spotting of her innocence, would be very loth any accident should blemish her face, disparage her fame, or impoverish her fortune, and yet from any or all of these she is utterly unable to guard her self. So that if Piety will not, yet interest methinks should render her an homager to that omnipotent power, from whence alone she can derive her safety.

Prayer as much our interest, as duty.

35. And now methinks a Duty that is thus bound on with the cords of a man, with human as well as divine perswasives, should not easily be shaken off. I wish I could say it never is, but I fear there are some of those I now speak to, who neglect it in spight of all these inducements; who though they can pretend nothing serious enough to own the name of business, do yet suffer a succession of I know not what impertinencies to divert them. And indeed were the expence of some Ladies days calculated, we should find every hour so full of emptiness, so overladen with vanities, that 'tis scarce imaginable where an office of devotion should croud in.

36. The

36. The morning is divided between sleep and dressing, nor would the morning suffice, but that they are fain to make a new computation to measure it, not by the Sun, but by their time of dining, which is often as late as the stationary hours of the Primitive Fasts, though upon a far differing motive. The afternoons being by this means reduc'd, are too short for those many divertisments that await them, and must therefore borrow as much of the night as they lent to the morning. And when the meer fatigue of pleasures send a Lady to her rest, 'tis not imaginable that she will permit Devotion to induce a yet greater, and more disagreeable lassitude, so that the whole round of her time seems to be a kind of magick circle, wherein nothing that is holy must appear. And indeed 'tis none of the highest stratagems of *Satan* thus to forestal their time; and by a perpetual supply of diversions, insensibly steal from them the opportunities of divine Offices; an artifice by which I presume he prevails on some, who would startle at his grosser and more apparent temptations.

Yet vanity and diversion leave no room for it.

37. Nor needs he more than the success of this project; for if this habitual neglect of Piety should not finally end in great and criminal commissions, (as 'tis naturally very apt to do) yet his interest is sufficiently secur'd by such a customary omission, which amounts to no less than the living *without God in the World*: a state so hopeless, that when the Apostle recollects to the Ephesians the wretchedness of their Gentile State, he do's it in those very words, *Eph.* 2. 12. And sure, those that live so under Christianity, are not in a better, but worse condition, by how much contempt of God is more unpardonable than ignorance.

The omission of prayer is to live without God in the world.

38. It therefore infinitely concerns those who are in danger of so fatal a snare, to look about them, and endeavour to countermine *Satan*, and be as industrious to secure their duty, as he is to supplant it; and to this purpose, one of the usefulest expedients I know, is to be aforehand with him; I mean, to make their Devotions the first business of the day; by which I intend not only those Ejaculations wherewith we all should open our eyes, but their more set and solemn Prayers; a Practice so highly expedient to the persons forementiond, that it falls little short of necessary; and that upon several reasons.

Prayer will be best secur'd by being the first work of the day.

39. First, in relation to one of the great ends of Morning Prayer, which is to supplicate the guidance and protection of God for the whole day. Now if this be not done till some Ladies Dressings be finish'd, 'twill be half a mockery, a most preposterous request, as to the greatest part of the day, which will be past before; and besides the absurdity, there is danger in it; for all the preceding time is as it were outlaw'd by it, put from under the Divine Protection. Alas, are God's safeguards to be only meridional, to shine out only with the noon-day Sun? Do they suppose *Satan* keeps their hours, and stirs not abroad till the afternoon, that there is no danger either of corporal or spiritual mischiefs before that time of the day? Certainly, if *the noise of the harp and the viol* which *Isaiah* mentions, ch. 5. 12. do not drown it, they may often hear a morning as well as evening Passing-bell. With how many others do's the glass of life run out, whilst they are at their looking-glasses? How many bodies are maim'd and wounded in the time they are trimming and decking theirs? And *who made them differ from others*, 1 *Cor.* 4. 7? Or what tenure have they in the safety of one moment, save what they owe to God's Providence? And what rational expectation can they have of that, when they do not invoke it?

If morning prayer be not begun till the Ladies dressing be finish'd, 'twill be a mockery and be really evening prayer.

40. Nor are the spiritual dangers less, but rather much more; and they must be very slight observers of themselves, if they not discern that snares may be laid for them in their recesses in their chambers, as well as in places of the most publick resort. Indeed, were there no other than what relates to their dress, and curiosity thereof, it were enough to evidence their danger; scarce any part of that but a temptation in it: to Pride, if it hit right, and please their fancy: to Anger and Vexation, if it do not. They had need therefore to put on their armour before their ornaments, by a prepossession of Prayer and Meditation to secure their vitals lest by an internal death of Grace, their bodies (in their utmost luster) proves but the painted Sepulcher of their souls.

They have reason to put on their armor, before their ornaments.

41. In the second place, this appears requisite in opposition to the indecency and incongruity of the contrary. How inverted an estimate do they make of things that postpone the interests of their souls, to the meanest member of their bodies, pay a supererrogating attendance to the one, before the other comes at all into their care. But what is yet worse, how vile a contumely is offer'd to the Majesty of God, who is used as they do their dunning Creditors, posted off with an excuse of

'Tis preposterous to prefer the interests of the soul, to those of the meanest members of the body.

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no leisure yet to speak with him; whilst in the mean time all the factors for their vanity can have ready access and full audience. God must attend till their Taylor, their Shoemaker please to dismiss them, and at the best, can be allowed only to bring up the rear of a whole shole of Artificers.

Most probably the whole dressing will not be finish'd till dinner calls.

42. But thirdly, 'tis very doubtful whether he shall obtain so much from them; for it may often happen that he shall be quite precluded: so numerous are the parts of a modish equipage, and so exact a symmetry is requir'd in the whole, that 'tis the business of many hours to complete it; when as 'twas said of the Roman Ladies, a council must be call'd about the placing of an hair that sits irregularly, when one thing after another shall be tried, and again rejected, as not exact, or not becoming; time all the while insensibly steals away, and though that will not stay for them, yet dinner doth, and then their bellies begin to murmur to pay any longer attendance on their backs, and claim the next turn; and between these two competitors, 'tis odds Devotion will be quite excluded, or reduc'd only to a grace before meat: (and well if that, considering how unfashionable even that is grown.) In the mean time, what a wretched improvidence is it, to reduce the one necessary business of the day to such uncertainties, nay almost to a certain disappointment.

If the time of prayer be not supplanted, yet the zeal will.

43. Yet suppose this hazard were only imaginary, and a Lady were infallibly sure not to lose the time for her Prayers; yet in the fourth place, she will be likely by such preceding diversions to lose much of her zeal in them, so that if they be said at all, they will scare be said in a due manner. There is alas such a repugnancy in our nature to any thing spiritual, that we cannot close in an instant; but as a benummed, frozen body will need some rubbing and chafing before it can be fit for motion; so our more frozen souls require some previous incitations before they can with any vigour exert themselves in Devotion. Now sure the dressing time (I mean such a dressing as we now suppose) is not very proper for such preparations. 'Tis, on the contrary, extreme apt to indispose and unfit them; for when the fancy is possest with so many little images of vanity, they will not easily be ejected. That ranging faculty is, God knows, too apt to bring in even the remotest diversions; but when it has such a stock ready at hand, how will it pour them in upon the mind, to the great allaying, if not utter extinguishing of Devotion.

There is somewhat of omen in beginnings.

44. When all these considerations are put together, 'twill sure appear wholesom counsel, that such persons should not trust so important a Duty to so many causualties, but in the first place secure a time for that, repair to their Oratory before their dressing room, and by an early consecration of themselves to God defeat *Satan's* claim, and discourage his attempts for the rest of the day. We know there is a natural efficacy in a good beginning, towards the producing a good ending: but in spiritual things the influence is yet greater, because it draws in Auxiliaries from above, and engages the yet farther assistances of Grace. Upon which account I am apt to believe, that where this Duty is sincerely and fervently performed in the morning, it will not totally be neglected in the succeeding parts of the day. 'Twill be easy to discern the same obligation, the same advantage of closing the day with God, that there was to begin it; and when those two boundaries are secured, when those are look'd upon as strict duty, and constantly observ'd, 'tis not unlikely but their Piety may grow generous, and with *David*, *Psal.* 55. 17. add to the *evening and morning, a noon-day office*; for where Devotion is real, 'tis apt to be progressive; and the more we converse with God, the more we shall desire to do so. Thus we see how this little cloud like that of *Elijah*, 1 *Kings* 18. 44. may *over-spread the Heavens*, and this handful of first-fruits may hallow the whole day.

There is more, a kind of right acquir'd by having the first possession.

45. Nay indeed, when it has advanced thus far, 'twill probably go farther; 'twill not keep it self only on the defensive part, but invade its opposits, get daily ground of those vanities by which it was before opprest. For when a Lady has in her Closet wash'd her cheeks with penitential tears, she cannot sure when she comes out, think them prepared for the varnish of the paint and fucus. When she has attentively examined her Conscience, that impartial mirror, and there discern'd all the blemishes of her nobler part, she will sure with somewhat a more cold concern consult her looking-glass. And when she has by pious vows and resolutions *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, *Rom.* 13. 14. 'twill be impossible for her to be very anxiously careful about her garments. This devout temper of her mind will by a holy *leger-demain* shuffle the Romances out of her hand, and substitute the Oracles of Truth; will not let her dream away her time in phantastick scenes, and elaborate nothing, but prompt her *to give all diligence to make her Calling and Election sure*. In a word, when she once understands what it is to spend one hour devoutly, she will endeavour to rescue

rescue all the rest from trifles and impertinent entertainments; and imploy them to purposes more worthy the great end of her being. Thus may she almost insensibly wind her self out of the snare, disintangle her self from those temptations wherewith she was enwrap'd; and by having her *heart so set at liberty, may run the ways of God's Commandments*, *Psal.* 119.

46. But private Devotions, though of excellent effect, cannot commute for the omission of Publick; nor indeed can it long maintain its vigour, unless sometimes cherished by the warmth of Christian Assemblies: and if God please to visit them in their Closets, they are (even by their own Laws of Civility) obliged to return Visits, and attend him in his house. I fear too many adapt the instance in the Formality too, and come as unconcernedly to him as they do to one another. 'Tis true, those that pay him a cordial reverence at home, will certainly do it at the Church; and therefore by the little we see performed by some there, we may doubt God sees as little in their Retirements. But what speak I of an hearty Reverence, when 'tis visible that there are those who pay none at all? How rare a sight is it for some Ladies to appear at Church? How many times (I had almost said hundreds) do we see their Coaches stand at the Play-house, for once at God's? They seem to own no distinction of days, unless it be, that Sunday is their most vacant season to take Physick, or to lie a-bed; and if such do ever come to Church, Devotion is like to be the least of their errand. Some new garment perhaps or dress is to be shew'd, and that thought the place where the most critical Judges of those things will be most at leisure to observe them: or if they come not to teach new fashions, it may be they come to learn; and such documents will be surer to be put in practice than any in the Sermon. Possibly they expect to see some friend or acquaintance there, and as if Christ were to be serv'd (as he was born) in an Inn, make his house the common rendezvouz in which to meet their Associates. If they have any more ingenious attractives, 'tis commonly that of Curiosity, to here some new celebrated Preacher, and that rather for his Rhetorick than his Divinity; and this Motive (though the best of the set) is but like that which prevail'd with those *Jews* St. *John* mentions, who came to *Jesus that they might see Lazarus*, *John* 12.

Private devotion cannot commute for the omission of publick.

47. I shall not rank among these Motives, that of Hypocrisie and seeming Holiness, for from that all the rest do acquit them. Indeed 'tis the only sin which this Age has seemed to reform, and that too only by way of *Antiperistasis*, not by the Vertue but the Iniquity of the Times. Religion is grown so unfashionable, so contemptible, that none can be now tempted to put on so ridiculous a disguise. And although as to single persons I confess Hypocrisie one of the deepest Guilts, such as has a peculiar portion assign'd it by Christ in the place of torment, *Mat.* 23. 15. yet as to Communities, I cannot but think it better to have a face of Religion than Profaness. The example of the former may work beyond its self, and Form of Godliness in some may produce the Power of it in others; but a pattern of Profaness, the farther it operates the worse, and all the progress it can make, is from one wickedness to another, so that I fear as St. *Bernard* wish'd for his feaver again, so the Church may e're long for her Hypocrites.

Hypocrisie is now an almost outdated ingredient of the offices of devotion.

48. But to recall my self from this digression, let us a little enquire how those, whom the foremention'd Motives bring to Church, behave themselves there; and that is indeed with great conformity to the ends of their coming, their errand is not to be Suppliants, neither do they put themselves in the posture, kneeling is impertinent for them who mean not to pray, but as the Apostle describes the Idolatrous service of the *Israelites*, *They sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play*; so these sit down to talk and laugh with their Pew-fellows, and rise up to gape and look about them. When they should be confessing their sins to Almighty God, they are apologizing (perhaps) to one another for the omission of a ceremonious visit, or some other breach of civility; when they should be *observing the goings of God in the Sanctuary*, *Psal.* 68. they are inquiring when this Lady came to Town, or when that goes out; nay perhaps the Theater is brought into the Temple, the last Play they saw is recollected, and Quotations enough brought thence to vie with the Preacher. 'Tis impossible to reckon up all their Topicks of discourse, nay it were indeed scandalous for one that reproves them to pretend to know by how many impertinencies (to say no worse) they profane that holy Place and Time.

Profaness takes up the whole.

49. But that all-seeing eye in whose presence they are, keeps an exact account, and will charge them not only with the principal but the product; not only with their own irreverences, but with those which by their example or encouragement they have occasion'd in others, nay farther even with that scandal which redounds to

Heathenism and Mahometanism will rise up in judgment against us Christians.

to Chriſtianity by it. For when one that is to chooſe a Religion, ſhall read the Precepts of *Pythagoras* enjoyning that the Gods muſt not be worſhip'd in paſſing by, as it were accidentally, but with the greateſt ſolemnity and intention, when they ſhall conſider the care of *Numa* in inſtituting Officers, who at Sacrifices and all divine Services, ſhould call upon the people to keep ſilence and advert to Devotion, or but the practice of the preſent *Mahometans*, who permit none to ſit in their *Moſchos*, nor to pray without proſtration: When I ſay this is conſidered, and compar'd with the ſcandalous indecency obſervable in our Churches, he will certainly exclude Chriſtianity from all competition in his choice; not allow that the name of a Religion, whoſe very Worſhip appears ſo profane, and whoſe Votaries mock the God they pretend to ſerve.

The female Sex are leſs obnoxious than the other.

50. Yet how ſevere ſoever the charge may lie againſt ſome, I am far from including all under it. I know there are many Ladies whoſe examples are reproaches to the other Sex, that help to fill our Congregations when Gentlemen deſert them, and to whom ſometimes we alone owe that our Churches are not furniſhed like the Feaſt in the Parable, *Luke* 14. 21. meerly out of *the high ways and hedges, with the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind*; yet ſome even of theſe may be liable to ſome irregularity, which may be the effects of inadvertency or miſperſwaſion, though not of contempt or profaneſs.

The indevotion of late coming to prayers diſturbs others.

51. And firſt 'tis obſervable in ſome who come conſtantly, that yet they come not early, ſo that a conſiderable part of Prayers is paſt e're they enter the Church. This firſt cauſes ſome diſturbance to others, the ſucceſſive entry of new comers keeping the Congregation in a continual motion and agitation; which how ungreeable it is to Devotion, *Numa* a Heathen Prince may teach us, who *Plutarch* tells us took a particular care, that in the time of divine worſhip, no knocking, clapping, or other noiſe ſhould be heard; as well knowing how much the operations of the intellect are obſtructed by any thing that importunes the Senſes. What would he have ſaid, ſhould he come into one of our City Congregations, where often during the whole time of Prayer, the clapping of Pew-doors do's outnoiſe the Reader?

Loſes the fundamental part of devotion the confeſſing of ſin.

52. But beſides the indecency of the thing and the interruption it gives to others, 'tis very injurious to themſelves; a kind of partial excommunication of their own inflicting, which excludes them from part of the divine Offices, and from that part too which is of the moſt univerſal Concern, I mean the confeſſion of ſins, which the wiſdom of our Church has fitly placed in the beginning of her Service, as the neceſſary introduction to all the reſt. For conſidering how obnoxious we are all to the wrath and vengeance of God, our firſt buſineſs is to deprecate that by an humble confeſſion of our guilt. Would any Malefactor that has forfeited his life to Juſtice, come boldly to his Prince, and without taking notice of his crimes, importune him to beſtow the greateſt favours and dignities upon him? Yet 'tis the very ſame abrupt impudence in us, to ſupplicate the Divine Majeſty before we attempt to atone him, to ask good things from him before we have acknowledged the ill we have done againſt him. And to ſuch God may juſtly make ſuch a return as *Auguſtus* did to one that had entertained him much below his Greatneſs, I knew not before that we were ſuch familiars.

Talking before ſervice begins, renders unfit for the duty.

53. It will much better become them to anticipate the time, *to wait at the poſts of his doors*, *Prov.* 8. 31. and contrive to be there before the Service begins, that ſo by previous recollection they may put their minds in a fit poſture of addreſs at the publick Audience: which (by the way) ſpeaks it to be no very laudable cuſtom which almoſt univerſally prevails, that thoſe few who do come early, ſpend the interval before ſervice in talking with one another, by which they do not only loſe the advantage of that time for preparation, but convert it into the direct contrary, do thereby actually unfit and indiſpoſe themſelves. God knows our hearts, even in their moſt compoſed temper, are too apt to create diverſions; we need not ſtart game for them to chaſe, and by prefacing our Prayer with ſecular diſcourſe, make a game for the ſame thoughts to return upon us in them. Beſides, in relation to the place, it has a ſpice of Profaneſs, 'tis the bringing the Moabite and Ammonite into the Temple, *Deut.* 23. 3. a kind of invaſion on God's Propriety, by introducing our worldly concerns or divertiſments into the houſe which is called by his name, ſolemnly dedicated to him, and therefore dedicated that it might be peculiar. So that with a little variation, we may to ſuch apply the expoſtulatory reproof of the Apoſtle to the Corinthians. 1 *Cor.* 11. 22. *what, have ye not houſes to talk and converſe in, or deſpiſe ye the Church of God?* But this is, I confeſs, a reproof that will not reach to many, there being ſo few of the better ſort that come early enough to talk before Service,

and as for those who talk at it, we have already rank'd them under another *Classis*. Yet give me leave to add, that those fall not much short of that degree of profaness, who come late only because they are loth to rise, or to abate any thing of the curiosity of their dress. For she that prefers her sloth or her vanity before God's Service, is like (how decently soever she be have her self) to give but an unsignificant attendance at it.

The unequal value of sermons has supplanted prayer.

54. But I guess this may in many proceed from another cause, which though less ill in their intentions, is not so in respect either of its unreasonableness, or its effects, and that is an unequal estimate they make of the parts of God's Service. This last Age has brought in such a partiality for Preaching, that Prayer seems comparatively (like *Sarah* to *Hagar*) despicable in their eyes: so that if they can but come time enough to the Sermon, they think they have discharged the weightier part of the Law, and of their own Duty. This misperswasion, though it have too generally diffused it self through both Sexes, yet seems to have been very especially imbibed by the Female. And besides the evidence that Sunday gives, the week-days afford no less. Let there be a Lecture though at the remotest part of the Town, what hurrying is there to it, but let the Bell tole never so loud for the Canonical hours of Common Prayer, 'twill not call the nearest of the Neighbourhood. I speak not of those who are at defiance with our Service, and have listed themselves in separate Congregations (for I intend not to trace them through their wild mazes) but of those who yet own our Church, and object not to its Offices, but only have suffered their value for them to be insensibly undermined by their greater zeal for Preaching. God sure intends an Harmony in all sacred Ordinances, and would not have set up a Party against each other, but mutually assist each others operation upon us. Thus Prayer disposes us to receive benefit by Preaching, and Preaching teaches us to Pray aright; and God grant we may long enjoy the publick opportunities of both. Yet since this *Age* has brought them to a competition, I must take leave to say, that if we come impartially to weigh Prayer and Preaching, the Ballance will incline another way than it seems with many to do, and we shall find Prayer the more essential part of Religion.

The difference of the use of preaching to heathens and Christians

55. The end of Preaching is twofold, either to teach us what we know not, or excite us to practice what we already know: now in relation to the first of these ends, I suppose there is a wide difference between Preaching at the first promulgation of the Gospel, and now. 'Twas then the only way of revealing to the World the whole mystery of our Salvation, so that the Apostles inference was than irrefragable, *How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a Preacher? Rom.* 10. 14. But where Christianity is planted, and the New Testament receiv'd, we have therein the whole Doctrine of Christ; nay we have not only the matter, but the very form of many of those Sermons which Christ and his Apostles preach'd; so that unless we think them not sufficiently gifted, we cannot but acknowledge we have in them ample instruction, both for Faith and Manners; enough, as the Apostle speaks, to *make us wise unto salvation*, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15. And the reading of those being a considerable part of our Churches Service, we have the most genuine Preaching even before the Minister ascends the Pulpit. Besides, for the help of those whose youth or incapacity disables them from making collections thence for themselves, our Church has epitomiz'd the most necessary Points of Belief and Practice in the Catechism, not (as the Roman) to preclude their farther search, but to supply them in the interim till they are qualified for it; and by that early infusion of Christian Principles, to secure them of that knowledge which is simply necessary to their Salvation.

Our concern lies chiefly in that end of preaching which is the exciting to practice.

56. Now sure, to people in this state, Preaching is not of so absolute necessity in respect of instruction, as it was for those who from Heathenism and Idolatry were to be brought first to the Knowledge, and then to the Faith of Christ. We seem therefore now more generally concern'd in the other end of Preaching, the exciting us to Practice; for alas, there are few of us who stumble on sin for want of light, but either through heedlesness, and want of looking before us, or else by a wilful prostration of our selves to it; so that we often need to be roused out of our negligence, to be frighted out of our stubbornness, and by a close application of those Truths we either forget or suppress, be animated to our Duty. And for this purpose Preaching is doubtless of excellent use, and the nauseating of it shews a very sick constitution of mind; yet sure the overgreedy desire may be a Disease also. He that eats more than he can concoct, do's not so much assist as oppress nature, and those that run from Sermon to Sermon, that allow themselves no time to

chew, much leſs to digeſt what they hear, will ſooner confound their brains than better their lives. Nay, it oft betrays them to a very pernicious deluſion, it diverts them from many of the practical parts of Piety, and yet gives them a confidence that they are extraordinarily Pious; and by their belief that Religion conſiſts principally in hearing, makes them forget to try themſelves by that more infallible teſt of doing God's will. So that whereas God never deſign'd Preaching for more than a guide in their way, they make it their way, and their end too; and Hearing muſt, like a circle, begin and terminate in it ſelf.

'Twould be the part of an unprofitable ſervant to pleaſe himſelf only in hearing his Lords commands.

57. I am ſure in ſecular concerns, we ſhould think him a very unprofitable ſervant, that after his Lord had given him directions what to do, ſhould be ſo tranſported with hearing his inſtructions, that he ſhould deſire to have it infinitely repeated, and ſo ſpend the time wherein he ſhould do the work. And we have reaſon to think God will make the ſame judgment of thoſe who do the like in his ſervice.

'Tis ſtrange the ravenous appetite of hearing ſhould conſiſt with niceneſs.

58. One would now think that this ravenous appetite of hearing ſhould ſuperſede all niceneſs in it, yet we find it do's not, but that ſome make a ſhift to be at once voracious and ſqueamiſh. If this ſpiritual food be not artificially dreſt, 'tis too groſs for their palates; the Phraſe muſt be elegant, the words well accented, and the *inticing words of mans wiſdom* which St. *Paul* diſclaims in his Preaching, 1 *Cor.* 2. 4. is that which they principally regard. Nay the memory of the Preacher becomes the moſt material Point of his Sermon, and the firſt glance on his Book prejudges him. I need not add the extravagancies of an uncouth tone, a furious vehemence, or phantaſtick geſture, wherein the ſoul and vital efficacy of Preaching has been ſolemnly placed. Now 'tis evident all theſe are but trivial Accompliſhments; ſo that thoſe who inſiſt ſo much on them, do make Preaching much leſs Sacred and Divine than indeed it is; and therefore cannot without abſurdity lay the main ſtreſs of Religion upon it, or make that the higheſt of God's Ordinances, which ow's all its gratefulneſs with them to the Endowments of men. Some may think I purſue this ſubject too far, but I am ſure I do it not with deſign to derogate from the juſt reſpect due to Preaching; only I would not have it monopolize our eſteem, or juſtle out another Duty, which is of more conſtant uſe, and indiſpenſible neceſſity.

Prayer is the breathing of the ſoul.

59. And ſuch certainly is Prayer, that reſpiration of the ſoul, which is ſo neceſſary, that it admits not of long intermiſſion, and therefore ſeems to carry the ſame proportion to hearing, which breathing do's to eating: we may make long intervals of feeding, and yet ſubſiſt; but if we ſhould do ſo in breathing, we cannot recover it. Prayer is like the morning and evening Sacrifice under the Law, which God ordain'd ſhould be perpetual; whereas Preaching is but like the Readings in the Synagogues on Sabbaths and Feſtivals. Indeed, however we have confounded the terms, 'tis Prayer only that can properly be call'd the worſhip of God; 'tis that by which we pay him his ſolemn homage, acknowledge his ſoveraignty, and our own dependance. When we hear, we do no more than what every Diſciple do's to his Maſter; but when we pray, we own him as the ſpring and ſource of all the good we expect, as the Author of our Being, and the Object of our Adoration: in a word, we do by it profeſs him our God; it being an impreſs of meer natural Religion to ſupplicate the Deity we acknowledge.

Equally neceſſary as it.

60. And as by Prayer we render the greateſt Honour to God, ſo likewiſe do we procure the greateſt advantages to our ſelves. Prayer is the powerful Engine, by which we draw down Bleſſings; 'tis the key which lets us into the immenſe Store-houſe of the Almighty; nay 'tis that upon which the Efficacy of Preaching depends. The Word is but a dead letter without the Spirit; and God has promiſed the Spirit to none but thoſe that ask it, *Luke* 11. 13. So that Prayer is that which enlivens and inſpirits our moſt ſacred actions: and accordingly in Scripture we find it ſtill a concomitant in all Eccleſiaſtical Concerns. When an Apoſtle was to be ſubſtituted in the room of *Judas*, we find they referr'd it not to the deciſion of lots, till God, who had the ſole diſpoſing of them, *Prov.* 16. 33. had been invoked by ſolemn Prayer, *Acts* 1. 24. So when *Barnabas* and *Saul* were to be ſeparated to the Miniſtry, though the appointment were by the Holy Ghoſt, yet that ſuperſeded not the neceſſity of Prayer; the Apoſtles prayed, (yea, and faſted too) before they laid their hand on them, *Acts* 13. 3. Nay, our Bleſſed Saviour Himſelf, though He knew *what was in man*, and needed no guidance but his own Omniſcience in his choice: yet we find that before his Election of the twelve Apoſtles, he continued a whole night in Prayer to God, *Luke* 6. 12. doubtleſs to teach us how requiſite Prayer is in all our important intereſts, which like the Pillar of Cloud and Fire to the

Iſrae-

Israelites, is our best Convoy through the Wilderness, through all the snares and temptations, through all the calamities and distresses of this World, and our most infallible Guide to the Land of Promise.

61. And sure when all these are the properties of Prayer, though private, they will not less belong to the publick; such a conspiration and union of importunate Devotion must have a proportionable increase in its effect; and if Heaven can suffer violence by the fervor of one single Votary, with what storms, what batteries will it be forc'd by a numerous Congregation? We find the Church is, by Christ, compared to *an Army with banners*, *Cant.* 6. 3. but sure never is this Army in so good array, in so invincible a posture as upon its knees. The Ecclesiastical story tells us of a Legion of Christians in *Aurelius*'s Camp, who in that posture discomfited two assailants at once, the enemy and the drought. That breath which they sent up in Prayers, like a kindly exhalation return'd in rain, and reliev'd the perishing Army: and had we but the same fervor, and the same innocency, could we lift up but as pure hands as they did, there would be no Blessing beyond our reach. But the less any of us find our selves so qualified, the more need we have to put our selves among those that are.

Prayer is strengthned by union.

62. There is an happy contagion in goodness; like green wood we may perhaps be kindled by the neighbouring flame: the example of anothers zeal may awake mine. However, there is some advantage in being in the company: those showers of benediction which their Prayers bring down, are so plentiful, that some drops at least may scatter upon those about them. We find *Elisha* for *Jehoshaphat*'s sake, endur'd the presence of *Jehoram*, whom otherwise he professes he would not have look'd towards, 2 *Kings* 3. 14. and God may perhaps do the like in this case; and as he prosper'd, *Potiphar* for *Joseph*'s sake, *Gen.* 39. 23. so the Piety of some few may redound to the benefit of all. From all these considerations I suppose may sufficiently be evinc'd the necessity and benefit of publick Prayer, and consequently the unreasonableness of those, who upon any pretence neglect it. I shall now only beseech those to whom I speak to make the application to themselves, and to shew they do so by their more early and more assiduous attendance on it.

It has a holy contagion and by its flame is apt to enkindle others.

63. There is also another Duty to which many of these to whom I write seem to need some incitation, and that is Communicating, a part of Devotion which the looser sort scarce ever think in season till their death beds; as if that Sacrament unlike the Romanists Extreme Unction, were only fit for expiring souls: but to such we may apply the words of the Angel to the woman, *Luke* 24. 5. *Why seek ye the living among the dead?* Why think ye that the Sun of Righteousness is only to shine in the shades of death, or that Christ is never to give us his flesh, till we are putting off our own? 'Tis one principal end of that Sacrament to engage and enable us to a new life; how preposterous then is it, how utterly inconsistent with that end to defer it to the hour of death. 'Tis true 'tis a good *Viaticum* for such as are in their way towards bliss, but it is too bold a hope to fancy that it shall in an instant bring them into that way, who have their whole life posted on in the contrary. The roads to Heaven and Hell lie sure too far asunder to be within distance of one step; nor can it with any safety be presum'd that once receiving at their death, shall expiate so many wilful neglects of it in their life.

Communicating the highest act of devotion, unhappily neglected.

64. But I shall suppose these total Omissions are not a common guilt: yet with many others the fault differs only in degree, they do not wholly omit, but yet come so infrequently as if they thought it a very arbitrary matter whether they come or no. And this truly is observable in many who seem to give good attendance on other parts of divine Worship: for indeed 'tis a sad spectacle to see, that let a Church be never so much crouded at Sermon, 'tis emptied in an instant when the Communion begins: people run as it were frighted from it, as if they thought with those in *Mallachy*, that *the table of our Lord is polluted*, *Mal.* 1. 12. that some pest or infection would thence break forth upon them. A strange indignity to the Majesty, and ingratitude to the love of our Redeemer. Let a King, or but some great man make a publick entertainment, how hard is it to keep back the pressing multitude: many Officers are necessary to repel the uninvited guests: and yet here there needs more to drive us to it, though the invitation be more general, and the Treat infinitely more magnificent.

Or if not totally omitted, infrequently attended.

65. I know this fault (like many other) shrouds it self under a fair disguise, and this barbarous neglect pretends to the humblest veneration. People say 'tis their great reverence they have for the Sacrament that keeps them at so great a distance; but sure that is but a fictitious reverence which discards Obedience; and when Christ com-

Vainly excus'd by the pretence of reverence.

commands our coming, our drawing back looks more like ſtubbornneſs and rebellion; than awe and reſpect. I ſuppoſe we pretend not to exceed the Primitive Chriſtians in humility and godly fear; and yet they communicated daily, and therefore ſure our reverence is of a much differing make from theirs, if it produce ſuch contrary effects. Indeed 'tis to be fear'd that many put a great cheat upon themſelves in this matter. The Euchariſt is juſtly accounted the higheſt of divine Ordinances, and thoſe who think of no preparation in other, yet have ſome general impreſſions of the neceſſity of it in this; but the uneaſineſs of the task diſcourages them, they dare not come without a wedding-garment, and yet are loth to be at the pains to put it on: ſo that all this goodly pretext of reverence, is but the Devil in *Samuel's* Mantle, is but ſloth clad in the habit of humility.

Or that at worſt 'tis only an omiſſion.

66. And to this temptation of ſloth, there is another thing very ſubſervient, and that is the eaſy and ſlight opinion which is commonly taken of ſins of Omiſſion. Many are ſtartled at great Commiſſions, think them to carry a face of deformity and horror, who in the mean time look on Omiſſions only as privations and meer nothings, as if all the affirmative Precepts were only things of form, put in by God rather to try our inclinations, than to oblige our performance; and ſo were rather overtures and propoſals which we may aſſent to or not, than injunctions which at our peril we muſt obey. A fancy no leſs abſurd than impious. That God ſhould be content ſo to compound with his creatures (and like a Prince overpower'd by his vaſſals) conſent to remit all their homage, abſolve them from all poſitive Duty, ſo they would be but ſo civil as not to fly in his face, or to commit outrage on his Perſon. But this wild imagination needs no other confutation, than that form of Inditement our Saviour gives us as the Model of that which ſhall be uſed at the laſt day, *Mat.* 25. where the whole Proceſs lies againſt ſins of Omiſſion, and yet the ſentence is as diſmal and irreverſible, as if all the Commiſſions in the World had been put into the Bill.

This omiſſion has the complicated guilt of being an omiſſion and an unkindneſs.

67. And certainly of all Omiſſions none is like to be more ſeverely charged than this of communicating, which is not only a diſobedience, but an unkindneſs, which ſtrikes not only at the Authority but the Love of our Lord, when he ſo affects a union with us that he creates Myſteries only to effect it, when he deſcends even to our ſenſuality, and becauſe we want ſpiritual appetites, puts himſelf within reach of our natural, and as he once veil'd his Divinity in fleſh, ſo now veils even that fleſh under the form of our corporal nouriſhment, only that he may the more indiſſolvably unite, yea incorporate himſelf with us: When I ſay he do's all this, we are not only impious but inhuman if it will not attract us. Nay farther, when he do's all this upon the moſt endearing memory of what he has before done for us, when he preſents himſelf to our embraces in the ſame form wherein he preſented himſelf to God for our expiation, when he ſhews us thoſe wounds which our iniquities made, thoſe ſtripes by which we were healed, that death by which we are revived; ſhall we to compleat the Scene of his Paſſion, force him alſo to that pathetick complaint, *Lam.* 1. 12. *Have ye no regard all ye that paſs by?* Shall we inſtead of ſmiting our breaſts (as did other witneſſes of his ſufferings) turn our backs? If we can habitually do this, 'tis to be feared the next degree will be to wag our heads too, and we ſhall have the profaneſs to deride, what we have not the Piety to commemorate.

Coldneſs will naturally improve to lothing.

68. And this ſeems to be no improbable fear: for in Religion there are gradual declinations as well as advances: coldneſs and tepidity will (if not ſtop'd in its progreſs) quickly grow to lothing and contempt. And indeed to what can we more reaſonably impute the great overflowings of profaneſs among us, than to our ill-husbanding the means of grace? Now certainly of all thoſe means there is none of greater energy and power than the bleſſed Sacrament.

Were there no other benefit than what the preparation implies, 'twere very conſiderable.

69. Were there no other benefit derived from it ſave that which the preparation implies, 'twere very conſiderable. It brings us to a recollection, fixes our indefinite purpoſes of ſearching and trying our ways, which elſe perhaps we ſhould infinitely defer, ſtops our career in ſin, and by acquainting us with our ſelves, ſhews us where our danger lies, and how we are to avert it, what breaches are made in upon our ſouls, and how we muſt repair them; all which are with many ſeldom thought of, but when the time of communicating approaches. We live ſo far off from our ſelves, know ſo little what is done in us, that we anſwer the deſcription the Prophet makes of the ſurprize of *Babylon*, of which the King knew nothing till poſt after poſt run to inform him that his *City was taken at one end*, Jer. 51. 14. We often lie ſecure while the enemy is within our walls, and therefore they are friendly alarms which the Sacrament gives us to look to our defence. But if when the Trum-

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pet sounds none will prepare himself to the Battle, if when the Minister gives warning of a Sacrament, and the preparation it requires, we go our ways, and with *Gallio care for none of those things*, or with *Felix*, Acts 24. 26. *put it off to a convenient time*; we wilfully expose our selves, and 'tis but just Christs dreadful menace should be executed upon us, that we *die in our sins*, who will frustrate such an opportunity of a rescue from them.

70. But 'tis not only this remoter and accidental advantage (this preventing Grace) which the Holy Eucharist affords; it contains yet greater and more intrinsick benefits, is a Spring of assisting Grace also: 'tis a Magazine of Spiritual Artillery to fortifie us against all assaults of the Devil, the great Catholicon for all the Maladies of our Souls, that which, if duly received, will qualifie us to make St. *Pauls* boast, *Phil.* 4. 13. *I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.* In a word, 'tis to us whatever we need, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, because it possesses us of him who is so, 1 *Cor.* 1. 31. So that whenever we neglect it, we manifestly betray our own interest, and do implicitly chuse death whilst we thus run from life.

But assisting grace and spiritual strength are confer'd.

71. Thus we see there is a concurrence of all sorts of Arguments for this Duty; oh that some (at least) of them may prevail! If we are not tractable enough to do it in Obedience, yet let us be so ingenious as to do it for Love, for Gratitude; or if for neither of those, let us be at least so wise as do it for Interest and Advantage. I know people are apt to pretend business; the Farm and the Oxen must excuse their coming to the Feast: but alas what business can there be of equal necessity or advantage with this? Yet even that Apology is superseded to those I now speak to, who as I observed before have leisure more than enough; so that it would be one part of the benefit, its taking up some of their time: let me therefore earnestly beseech them, not to grudge a few of their vacant hours to this so happy an employment.

There is a concurrence of all sorts of arguments for this duty

72. Did any of their near Friends and Relations invite them to an interview, they would not think him too importune, though he repeated the summons weekly, nay daily, but would punctually observe the meeting: and when their Saviour much seldomer entreats their company, shall he not obtain it? must he never see them but at two or three solemn times of the year? and shall they wonder at any intervening invitation (as the Shunammites husband did at her going to the Prophet when it was *neither new Moon nor Sabbath*, 2 *Kings* 4. 23.) and tell him 'tis not yet *Easter* or *Christmas*: this were not only to be irreligious, but rude; and methinks those who stand so much upon punctilious of Civility to one another, should not then only lay aside their good manners when they are to treat with their Redeemer. Certainly he is not so unpleasant company that they need shun his converse: if he do appear so to any, 'tis that shunning that is the cause of it. He do's not open his treasures to strangers: they that come now and then for form sake, no wonder if their entertainment be as cold as their address. They that would indeed *taste how sweet the Lord is*, *Psal.* 34. 8. must by the frequency of their coming shew the heartiness of it; and then they would indeed find it a *feast of fat things*, as the Prophet speaks.

We do not use to disappoint an invitation.

73. In a word, let them but make experiment, resolve for a certain time (be it a year or thereabouts) to omit no opportunity, (and withal no due preparation) of communicating, I am a little confident they will afterwards need no other importunity but that of their own longings: the expiration of that definite time will prove the beginning of an indefinite, and their resolutions will have no other limit but their lives. For certainly there is not in all the whole mystery of Godliness, in all the Oeconomy of the Gospel, so expedite, so infallible a means of growth in Grace, as a frequent and worthy participation of this blessed Sacrament. I cannot therefore more pertinently close this Section, than with this exhortation to it, by which they will not only compleat all their Devotions, crown and hallow the rest of their Oblations to God, but they will be advanc'd also in all parts of practical Piety. For though this and other sacred Offices be perform'd in the Church, the efficacy of them is not circumscribed within those walls, but follows the devout soul through all the occurrences of human life.

The use of the Sacrament would encrease the love and value of it.

74. She that has intently consider'd the presence of God in the Sanctuary, has learn'd so much of his Ubiquity, that she will not easily forget it in other places; and she that remembers that, will need no other guard to secure her innocence, no other incentive to animate her endeavours, since she is view'd by him who is equally powerful to punish or reward, who regards not the persons of the mighty, nor can be aw'd into the connivance of a crime. Indeed a serious advertence to the divine

The conviction of God's presence in the Sanctuary, will fix an awe of it every where else.

Presence, is the most certain curb to all disorderly appetites, as on the contrary the *not having God before their eyes*, is in Scripture the comprehensive description of the most wretchless profligated state of sin. It concerns therefore all those who aspire to true Piety, to nourish that awful sense in their hearts, as that which will best enable them to practice the Apostles advice, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. *To cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.*

All excellencies in women that have not Piety are but jewels of Gold in a Swines snout.

75. I am sensible that this Section is spun out to a length very unproportionable to the former: but as the principal wheel in an artificial movement may be allowed a bulk somewhat answerable to its use, so upon the same account, the size of this is not unjustifiable, the Piety which this designs to recommend being the one necessary thing, which must influence all other endowments. We know the course resemblance *Solomon* makes of a *fair woman without discretion, that she is like a jewel of gold in a swines snout*, *Prov.* 11. 12. but even that discretion (if any such could be) without Piety were but the adding one jewel more, exposing another valuable thing to the same despicable ridiculous use. But to speak truly there is no real Discretion, where there is no Religion. And therefore *Solomon* seems in this place to understand by it that practical Wisdom, which in the sacred Dialect (his writings especially) is equivalent to the fear of the Lord. 'Tis true, there may be a rallying wit to scoff and abuse, a serpentine Wilines to undermine and deceive; but that sort of Wisdom (like that of *Achitophel*) finally converts into Foolishness, do's very often appear to do so in this life, but must certainly in the next, because it builds upon a false bottom, prefers temporal things before eternal. And as neither Beauty nor Wit (the two celebrated accomplishments of women) so will neither Greatness and Honour give any advantage without Piety: 'twill only (as hath been already observ'd) make them more exemplary sinners, inflame the account, and so expose them to a greater degree of condemnation. For sure 'tis not their Sex that will rescue them from the dismal denunciation of the Wise man, *Wisd.* 6. 6. *Mighty men shall be mightily tormented.* I conclude all with another irrefragable Maxim of the same Author, *Whether one be Rich, Noble, or Poor, their Glory is the Fear of the Lord.*

THE Ladies Calling.

PART II. SECT. I.

Of Virgins.

There are besides the general duties of Piety, particular ones referring to the several states of life.

WE have taken a view of those general Qualifications, which are at once the Duty and the Ornament of the Female Sex consider'd at large: These, like the common Genus, involve all. But there are also specifick differences arising from the several circumstances and states of Life, some whereof may exact greater degrees even of the former Vertues, and all may have some distinct and peculiar Requisites adapted to that particular state and condition: and of these our propos'd method engages us now to consider. Human life is full of vicissitudes and changes, so that 'tis impossible to enumerate all the lesser accidental alterations to which it is liable. But the principal and most distinct Scenes, in which a Woman can be suppos'd regularly to be an Actor, are these three, *Virginity*, *Marriage*, and *Widowhood*: which as they differ widely from each other, so for the discharging their respective Duties, there are peculiar cautions worthy to be adverted to.

Virginity is the first as in time, so also in excellency.

2. Virginity is first, in order of time, and if we will take Saint *Paul*'s judgment, in respect of excellence also, 1 *Cor.* 7. And indeed, she that preserves her self in that state upon the account he mentions, v. 33. that *she may care for the things that are of the Lord, that she may be holy both in Body and Spirit*, deserves a great deal of Veneration, as making one of the nearest approaches to the Angelical State. And accordingly, in the Primitive Times, such a Virginity was had in a singular Estimation, and by the assignment of the School-men hath a particular Coronet of Glory belonging to it. Nay even among the Heathens, a consecrated Virgin was look'd on as a thing most sacred. The Roman Vestals had extraordinary priviledges allowed them by the State: and they were generally held in such Reverence, that Testaments and other Depositums of the greatest Trust were usually committed to their Custody, as to the surest and most inviolable Sanctuary. Nay their presence was so to convicted Malefactors; the Magistrates veiling their *fasces* when they appear'd, and giving up the Criminal to the commanding Intercession of Virgin Innocence.

'Twere to be wish'd that the abuses of the Roman Church had been reform'd, without an abolition.

3. As for the Religious Orders of Virgins in the present Roman Church, though some, and those very great abuses have crept in; yet I think 'twere to be wish'd, that those who supprest them in this Nation, had confin'd themselves within the bounds of a Reformation, by choosing rather to rectifie and regulate, than abolish them.

One may be a Votaress though not profest.

4. But though there be not among us such Societies, yet there may be *Nuns* who are not Profest. She who has devoted her heart to God, and the better to secure his Interest against the most insinuating rival of Human Love, intends to admit none, and prays that she may not; do's by those humble purposes consecrate her self to God: and perhaps more acceptably, than if her presumption should make her more positive, and engage her in a Vow she is not sure to perform.

The contempt under which Virginity is fall'n how to be avoided.

5. But this is a case do's not much need stating in our Clime, wherein Women are so little transported with this zeal of voluntary Virginity, that there are but few can find patience for it when necessary. An old Maid is now thought such a Curse as no Poetick Fury can exceed, look'd on as the most calamitous Creature in nature. And I so far yield to the opinion, as to confess it so to those who are kept in that state against their wills; but sure the original of that misery is from the desire, not the restraint of Marriage: let them but suppress that once, and the other will never

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be their Infelicity. But I must not be so unkind to the Sex, as to think 'tis always such desire that gives them aversion to Celibacy; I doubt not many are frighted only with the vulgar contempt under which that state lies: for which if there be no cure, yet there is the same armour against this, which is against all other causeless Reproaches *viz.* to contemn it. Yet I am a little apt to believe there may be a prevention in the case. If the superannuated Virgins would behave themselves with Gravity and Reservedness, addict themselves to the strictest Vertue and Piety, they would give the World some cause to believe, 'twas not their necessity, but their choice which kept them unmarried; that they were pre-engag'd to a better Amour, espous'd to the Spiritual Bridegroom: and this would give them among the soberer sort, at least the reverence and esteem of Matrons. Or if after all caution and endeavour, they chance to fall under the Tongues of malicious slanderers; this is no more than happens in all other Instances of Duty: and if contempt be to be avoided, Christianity it self must be quitted as well as Virgin Chastity. But if on the other side they endeavour to disguise their Age by all the impostures and gaieties of a youthful dress and behaviour, if they still herd themselves among the youngest and vainest company, betray a young Mind in an aged Body; this must certainly expose them to scorn and censure. If no Play, no Ball or Dancing-meeting can escape them, people will undoubtedly conclude that they desire to put off themselves, to meet with Chapmen, who so constantly keep the Fairs. I wish therefore they would more universally try the former expedients which I am confident is the best Amulet against the reproach they so much dread, and may also deliver them from the danger of a more costly remedy; I mean that of an unequal and imprudent Match, which many have rush'd upon as they have ran frighted from the other, and so by an unhappy contradiction, do both stay long and marry hastily, gall their necks to spare their ears, and run into the Yoke rather than hear so slight and unreasonable a Reproach. They need not, I think, be upbraided with the folly of such an Election, since their own Experience is (to many of them) but too severe a Monitor. I shall not insist further on this, but having given the elder Virgins that Ensign of their Seniority as to stand first in my Discourse, I shall now address more generally to the rest.

The modesty of Virgins.

6. And here the two grand Elements essential to the Virgin state, are Modesty and Obedience, which though necessary to all, yet are in a more eminent degree requir'd here. And therefore, though I have spoken largely of the vertue of Modesty in the first part of this Tract, yet it will not be impertinent to make some further reflections on it, by way of application to Virgins, in whom Modesty should appear in its highest elevation, and should come up to Shamefac'dness. Her look, her speech, her whole behaviour should own an humble distrust of her self; she is to look on her self but as a Novice, a Probationer in the World, and must take this time rather to learn and observe, than to dictate and prescribe. Indeed there is scarce any thing looks more indecent, than to see a young Maid too forward and confident in her talk. 'Tis the Opinion of the Wise-man, *Eccles.* 32. 8. that *a young man should scarce speak, though twice ask'd*: in proportion to which, 'twill sure not become a young Woman, whose Sex puts her under greater restraints, to be either importunate or magisterial in her discourse. And though that which former Ages call'd Boldness, is now only Assurance and good Breeding, yet we have seen such bad superstructures upon that Foundation, as sure will not much recommend it to any considering Person.

Nothing is more nice and delicate than a Maiden vertue.

7. But there is another breach of Modesty, as it relates to Chastity, in which they are yet more especially concern'd. The very name of Virgin imports a most critical niceness in that point. Every indecent curiosity, or impure fancy, is a deflow'ring of the mind, and every the least corruption of them gives some degrees of defilement to the Body too. For between the state of pure immaculate Virginity and arrant Prostitution, there are many intermedial steps; and she that makes any of them, is so far departed from her first Integrity. She that listens to any wanton Discourse has violated her ears, she that speaks any, her tongue; every immodest glance vitiates her eye, and every the lightest act of dalliance leaves something of stain and sullage behind it. There is therefore a most rigorous caution requisite herein: for as nothing is more clean and white than a perfect Virginity, so every the least spot or soil is the more discernable. Besides, Youth is for the most part flexible, and easily warps into a crookedness, and therefore can never set it self too far from a temptation. Our tender blossoms we are fain to skreen and shelter, because every unkindly air nips and destroys them: and nothing can be more nice and delicate

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than a Maiden Vertue, which ought not to be expos'd to any of those malignant airs which may blast and corrupt it, of which God knows there are too many; some that blow from within, and others from without.

8. Of the first sort, there is none more mischievous than Curiosity, a temptation which foil'd human Nature even in Paradise: and therefore sure a feeble Girl ought not to trust her self with that which subdued her better fortified Parent. The truth is, an affected Ignorance cannot be so blamable in other cases as it is commendable in this. Indeed it is the surest and most invincible Guard; for she who is curious to know indecent things, 'tis odds but she will too soon and too dearly buy the learning. The suppressing and detesting all such Curiosities, is therefore that eminent fundamental piece of Continence I would recommend to them, as that which will protect and secure all the rest.

'Tis endanger'd by Curiosity.

9. But when they have set this guard upon themselves, they must provide against Foreign assaults too; the most dangerous whereof I take to be ill Company and Idleness. Against the first they must provide by a prudent choice of Conversation, which should generally be of their own Sex; yet not all of that neither, but such who will at least entertain them innocently if not profitably. Against the second they may secure themselves by a constant series of Employments: I mean not such frivolous ones as are more idle than doing nothing, but such as are ingenious, and some way worth their time: wherein as the first is to be given to the offices of Piety, so in the Intervals of those, there are divers others, by which they may not unusefully fill up the vacancies of their time: such are the acquiring of any of those ornamental improvements which become their Quality, as Writing, Needle-works, Languages, Musick, or the like. If I should here insert the art of Oeconomy and Houshold Managery, I should not think I affronted them in it; that being the most proper Feminine business, from which neither wealth nor greatness can totally absolve them: and a little of the Theory in their Parents house, would much assist them towards the Practick when they come to their own. In a word, there are many parts of knowledge useful for Civil as well as Divine Life; and the improving themselves in any of those, is a rational Employment.

By ill Company and Idleness.

10. But I confess I know not how to reduce to that Head many of those things which from divertisements, are now step'd up to be the solemn business of many young Ladies, (and I doubt of some old.) Such is in the first place Gaming, a recreation whose lawfulness I question not, whilst it keeps within the bounds of a recreation: but when it sets up for a Calling, I know not whence it derives its licensse. And a Calling sure it seems to be with some; a laborious one too, such as they toil night and day at, nay do not allow themselves that remission which the Laws both of God and Man have provided for the meanest Mechanick: the Sabbath is to them no day of rest, but this Trade go's on when all Shops are shut. I know not how they satisfie themselves in such an habitual waste of their time, (besides all the incidental faults of Avarice and anger,) but I much doubt that Plea, whatsoever it is which passes with them, will scarce hold weight at his Tribunal, who has commanded us to *redeem*, not fling away *our time*.

By gaming.

11. There is another thing to which some devote a very considerable part of their time, and that is the reading Romances, which seems now to be thought the peculiar and only becoming study of young Ladies. I confess their Youth may a little adapt it to them when they were Children, and I wish they were always in their event as harmless; but I fear they often leave ill impressions behind them. Those amorous Passions, which 'tis their design to paint to the utmost Life, are apt to insinuate themselves into their unwary Readers, and by an unhappy inversion a Copy shall produce an Original. When a poor young Creature shall read there of some triumphant Beauty, that has I know not how many captiv'd Knights prostrate at her feet, she will probably be tempted to think it a fine thing: and may reflect how much she loses time, that has not yet subdu'd one heart: and then her business will be to spread her nets, lay her toils to catch some body who will more fatally ensnare her. And when she has once wound her self into an Amour, those Authors are subtil Casuists for all difficult cases that may occur in it, will instruct in the necessary Artifices of deluding Parents and Friends, and put her ruin perfectly in her own power. And truly this seems to be so natural a consequent of this sort of study, that of all the divertisements that look so innocently, they can scarce fall upon any more hazardous. Indeed, 'tis very difficult to imagine what vast mischief is done to the World, by the false notions and images of things; particularly of Love and Honour, those noblest concerns of human Life, represented in these Mirrors. But

By reading Romances.

when we consider upon what principles the Duellists and Hectors of the Age defend their Outrages, and how great a Devotion is paid to Lust, instead of virtuous Love, we cannot be to seek for the Gospel which makes these Doctrines appear Orthodox.

By visits. 12. As for the entertainments which they find abroad, they may be innocent, or otherwise, according as they are managed. The common entercourse of Civility is a debt to Humanity, and therefore mutual Visits may often be necessary, and so (in some degree) may be several harmless and healthful recreations which may call them abroad, for I write not now to Nuns, and have no purpose to confine them to a Cloister. Yet on the other side to be always wandring, is the condition of a Vagabond; and of the two, 'tis better to be a Prisoner to ones home than a stranger. *Solomon* links it with some very unlaudable qualities of a Woman, *Prov.* 7. 11. that *her feet abide not in her house*; and 'tis an unhappy impotence not to be able to stay at home, when there is any thing to be seen abroad: that any Mask, or Revel, any Jollity of others must be their rack and torment, if they can not get to it. Alas such meetings are not so sure to be safe, that they had need be frequent, and they are of all others least like to be safe to those, who much dote on them. And therefore those that find they do so, had need to counterbiass their minds, and set them to something better, and by more serious entertainments supplant those vanities, which at the best are childish, and may often prove worse; it being too probable that those *Dinah*'s which are still gadding, though on pretence to see only the daughters of the Land, *Gen.* 34. may at last meet with a son of *Hamor*.

By dressing. 13. There is also another great devourer of time subservient to the former, I mean Dressing: for they that love to be seen much abroad, will be sure be seen in the most exact Form. And this is an employment that do's not steal but challenge their time; what they waste here is *cum Privilegio*, it being by the verdict of this age the proper business, the one science wherein a young Lady is to be perfectly verst: so that now all vertuous emulation is converted into this single Ambition, who shall excel in this Faculty. A vanity which I confess is more excusable in the youngest than the elder sort; they being supposable not yet to have outworn the reliques of their Childhood, to which toies and gaiety were proportionable. Besides, 'tis sure allowable upon a soberer account, that they who design Marriage should give themselves the advantage of decent Ornaments, and not by the negligent rudeness of their Dress belie Nature, and render themselves less amiable than she has made them. But all this being granted, 'twill by no means justifie that excessive curiosity and solicitude, that expence of time and money too, which is now used. A very moderate degree of all those will serve for that ordinary decency which they need provide for, will keep them from the reproach of an affected Singularity, which is as much as a sober Person need take care for. And I must take leave to say, that in order to Marriage, such a moderation is much likelier to succeed than the contrary extravagance. Among the prudenter sort of Men I am sure it is, if it be not among the loose and vain, against which 'twill be their guard, and so do them the greater service. For certainly, he that chooses a wife for those qualities for which a wise man would refuse her, understands so little what Marriage is, as portends no great felicity to her that shall have him. But if they desire to marry Men of sobriety and discretion, they are obliged in justice to bring the same qualities they expect, which will be very ill evidenced by that excess and vanity we now speak of.

This setting themselves out, of young Ladies, which they design for their preferment, is a great hindrance of it. 14. For to speak a plain (though perhaps ungrateful) truth, this (together with some of the modish liberties now in use) is it, which keeps so many young Ladies about the Town unmarried, 'till they lose the Epithet of young. Sober Men are afraid to venture upon a humor so disagreeing to their own, lest whilst (according to the primitive reason of Marriage) they seek a help, they espouse a ruin. But this is especially dreadful to a plain Country Gentleman, who looks upon one of these fine Women as a Gaudy Idol, to whom if he once become a Votary, he must sacrifice a great part of his Fortune, and all his Content. How reasonable that apprehension is, the many wracks of considerable Families do too evidently attest. But I presume some of the nicer Ladies have such a contempt of any thing that they please to call Rustick, that they will not much regret the averting of those whom they so despise. They will not, perhaps, while they are in pursuit or hopes of others; but when those fail, these will be look'd on as a welcome Reserve: and therefore 'twill be no Prudence to cut themselves off from that last resort, lest they (as many have done) betake themselves to much worse. For as in many instances 'tis the Country which feeds and maintains the grandeur of the Town, so of all

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commerces there, Marriage would sooneſt fail, if all Rural ſupplies were cut off.

15. But I have purſued this ſpeculation farther than perhaps my Virgin Readers will thank me for: I ſhall return to that which it was brought to inforce, and beſeech them, that if not to Men, yet to approve themſelves to God, they will confine themſelves in the matter of their Dreſs within the due limits of Decency and Sobriety. I ſhall not direct them to thoſe ſtrict Rules which *Tertullian* and ſome other of the ancient Fathers have preſcrib'd in this matter; my Petition is only, That our Virgins would at leaſt ſo take care of their Bodies, as Perſons that alſo have a Soul: which if they can be perſwaded to, they may reſerve much of their time for more worthy uſes than thoſe of the Comb, the Tuillets, and the Glaſs. And truly, 'tis not a little their concern to do ſo, for this Spring of their age is that Critical Inſtant that muſt either confirm or blaſt the hopes of all the ſucceeding Seaſons. The minds of young People are uſually compared to a blank ſheet of Paper, equally capable of the beſt or the wroſt Impreſſions: 'tis pitty they ſhould be fill'd with childiſh Scrawls and little inſignificant Figures, but 'tis ſhame and horror they ſhould be ſtain'd with any vicious Characters, any blots of Impurity or Diſhonour. To prevent which, let the ſevereſt notions of Modeſty and Honour be early and deeply impreſt upon their Souls, graven as with the point of a Diamond, that they may be as indelible as they are indiſpenſibly neceſſary to the Virgin ſtate.

The adorning of the mind were a more laudable endeavour.

16. There is alſo another very requiſite Quality, and that is Obedience. The younger ſort of Virgins are ſuppoſed to have Parents, or if any has been ſo unhappy as to loſe them early, they commonly are left in the charge of ſome Friend or Guardian, that is to ſupply the place: ſo they cannot be to ſeek to whom this Obedience is to be paid. And it is not more their Duty than their Intereſt to pay it. Youth is apt to be fooliſh in its Deſigns, and heady in the purſuit of them; and there can be nothing more deplorable than to have it left to its ſelf. And therefore God, who permits not even the Brutes to deſtitute their young ones till they attain to the perfection of their Kind, has put Children under the guidance and protection of their Parents, 'till by the maturing of their Judgments they are qualified to be their own Conductors. Now this Obedience (as that which is due to all other Superiors) is to extend it ſelf to all things that are either good or indifferent, and has no clauſe of exception, but only where the Command is unlawful. And in ſo wide a ſcene of Action, there will occur ſo many particular occaſions of ſubmiſſion, that they had need have a great reverence of their Parents judgments, and diſtruſt of their own. And if it ſhould happen that ſome Parents are not qualified to give them the former, yet the general imbecillity of their age, will remain a conſtant ground of the latter: ſo that they may ſafelier venture themſelves to their Parents miſguidance than their own, by how much the errors of Humility and Obedience, are leſs malignant than thoſe of Preſumption and Arrogance.

The Obedience of Virgins.

17. But this is a Doctrine which will ſcarce paſs for Orthodox with many of the young Women of our days, with whom 'tis prejudice enough againſt the prudenteſt advice, that it comes from their Parents. 'Tis the grand Ingenuity of theſe Times to turn every thing into Ridicule; and if a Girl can but rally ſmartly upon the ſober admonition of a Parent, ſhe concludes ſhe is the abler Perſon, takes her ſelf for a Wit, and the other for a Fop; (a Bugbear word, deviſed to fright all ſeriouſneſs and ſobriety out of the World) and learns not only to diſobey, but to contemn. Indeed the great confidence that Youth now ſeems to have of its ſelf, as it is very indecent, ſo it is extremely pernicious. Children that will attempt to go alone before their time, oft get dangerous falls: and when thoſe who are but little removed from Children, ſhall caſt off the wiſer conduct of others, they oft ſadly miſcarry by their own.

There is among youth a moſt miſchievous inſolence to contemn advice becauſe it comes from a Parent.

18. I Know this Age has ſo great a contempt of the former, that 'tis but matter of ſcorn to alledge any of their Cuſtoms, elſe I ſhould ſay that the liberties that are taken now, would then have been ſtartled at. They that ſhould then have ſeen a young Maid rambling abroad without her Mother, or ſome other prudent Perſon, would have look'd on her as a ſtray, and thought it but a neighbourly office to have brought her home: whereas now 'tis a rarity to ſee them in any company graver than themſelves, and ſhe that go's with her Parent (unleſs it be ſuch a Parent as is as wild as her ſelf) thinks ſhe do's but walk abroad with her Jailor. But ſure there are no ſmall miſchiefs that attend this liberty; for it leaves them perfectly to the choice of their company, a thing of too weighty an importance for giddy heads to determine: who will be ſure to elect ſuch as are of their own humor, with whom they may keep up a traffick of little Impertinencies and trifling Entertainments: and ſo

So alſo to avoid their company.

by conſequence, condemn themſelves never to grow wiſer, which they might do by an Ingenious Converſation. Nay 'tis well if that negative ill be the worſt, for it gives opportunity to any that have ill deſigns upon them. It will be eaſy getting into their company, who have no guard to keep any body out, and as eaſy by little compliances and flatteries to inſinuate into their good Graces, who have not the ſagacity to diſcern to what inſidious purpoſes thoſe blandiſhments are directed: and when they once begin to nibble at that Bait, to be pleaſed with the Courtſhip, 'tis great odds they do not eſcape the Hook.

Young women having no guard about them, are frequently enſnar'd.

19. Alas, how many poor innocent Creatures have been thus indiſcernibly enſnared; have at firſt perhaps only liked the Wit and Raillery, perhaps the Language and Addreſs, then the Freedom and good Humor; 'till at laſt they come to like the Perſon. It is therefore a moſt neceſſary caution for young Women, not to truſt too much to their own conduct, but to own their dependance on thoſe, to whom God and Nature has ſubjected them, and to look on it not as their reſtraint and burden, but as their ſhelter and protection. For where once the authority of a Parent comes to be deſpis'd, though in the lighteſt inſtance, it lays the foundation of utmoſt Diſobedience. She that will not be preſcrib'd to in the choice of her ordinary diverting company, will leſs be ſo in chooſing the fixt Companion of her Life: and we find it often eventually true, That thoſe who govern themſelves in the former, will not be govern'd by their Friends in the latter, but by pre-engagements of their own, prevent their elections for them.

A ſelf diſpoſal is the higheſt injury a child can do a Parent.

20. And this is one of the higheſt Injuries they can do their Parents, who have ſuch a native Right in them, that 'tis no leſs an Injuſtice than Diſobedience to diſpoſe of themſelves without them. This right of the Parent is ſo undoubted, that we find God himſelf gives way to it, and will not ſuffer the moſt Holy pretence, no not that of a Vow, to invade it, as we may ſee his own ſtating of the Caſe, *Numb.* 30. How will he then reſent it, to have this ſo indiſpenſable a Law violated upon the impulſe of an impotent Paſſion, an amorous Inclination? Nor is the folly leſs than the ſin: they injure and afflict their Parents, but they generally ruin and undo themſelves; and that upon a double account. Firſt, as to the ſecular part: thoſe that are ſo raſh as to make ſuch Matches, cannot be imagined ſo provident as to examine how agreeable 'tis to their Intereſt, or to contrive for any thing beyond the Marriage. The thoughts of their future temporal Conditions (like thoſe of the Eternal) can find no room amidſt their fooliſh Raptures, but as if Love were indeed that Deity which the Poets feigned it, they depend on it for all, and take no farther care. And event do's commonly too ſoon inſtruct them in deceitfulneſs of that Truſt; Love being ſo unable to ſupport them that it cannot maintain it ſelf, but quickly expires when it has brought the Lovers into thoſe ſtraits from whence it cannot reſcue them. So that indeed it do's but play the Decoy with them, brings them into the nooſe, and then retires. For when ſecular Wants begin to pinch them, all the Tranſports of their Kindneſs do uſually convert into mutual Accuſations, for having made each other miſerable.

Is generally unfortunate.

21. And indeed there is no reaſon to expect any better event, becauſe in the ſecond place they forfeit their title to the Divine Bleſſing. Nay they put themſelves out of the capacity to ask it, it being a ridiculous Impudence to beg God to proſper the tranſgreſſions of his Law. Such Weddings ſeem to invoke only ſome of the Poetick Romantick Deities, *Venus* and *Hymen*, from whence they derive a happineſs as fictitious as are the Gods that are to ſend it. Let all Virgins therefore religiouſly obſerve this part of Obedience to their Parents, that they may not only have their Benediction but Gods. And to that purpoſe let this be laid as a Fundamental Rule, That they never hearken to any propoſal of Marriage made them from any other hand; but when any ſuch Overture is made, divert the addreſs from her ſelf and direct it to her Parents, which will be the beſt teſt imaginable for any Pretender. For if he know himſelf worthy of her, he will not fear to avow his deſign to them; and therefore if he decline that, 'tis a certain Symtom, he is conſcious of ſomething that he knows will not give a valuable conſideration: ſo that this courſe will repel no Suitor but ſuch as it is their Intereſt not to admit. Beſides, 'tis moſt agreeable to the Virgin Modeſty, which ſhould make Marriage an act rather of their obedience than their choice; and they that think their Friends too ſlow pac'd in the matter, and ſeek to out-run them, give cauſe to ſuſpect they are ſpurr'd on by ſomewhat too warm deſires.

22. But

22. But as a Daughter is neither to anticipate, nor contradict the will of her Parent, so (to hang the ballance even) I must say she is not oblig'd to force her own, by marrying where she cannot love; for a negative voice in the case is sure as much the Childs right as the Parents. 'Tis true, she ought well to examine the grounds of her aversion, and if they prove only childish and fanciful, should endeavour to correct them by reason and sober consideration: but if after all she cannot leave to hate, I think she should not proceed to Marry. I confess I see not how she can, without a Sacrilegious Hypocrisie, vow so solemnly to love, where she at the instant actually abhors: and where the married state is begun with such a Perjury, 'tis no wonder to find it continued on at the same rate, that other parts of the Vow be also violated, and that she observe the Negative part no more than the Positive, and as little forsake others, as she do's heartily cleave to her Husband. I fear this is a consequence whereof there are too many sad Instances now extant. For though doubtless there are some Vertues which will hold out against all the temptations their aversions can give, nay which do at last even conquer those aversions, and render their duty as easy as they have kept it safe: yet we find there are but some that do so, that it is no inseparable property of the Sex, and therefore it is sure too hazardous an Experiment for any of them to venture on. *How far a Virgin may interpose her dissent.*

23. And if they may not upon the more generous motive of Obedience, much less may they upon the worse inducements of Avarice and Ambition. For a Woman to make a Vow to the Man, and yet intend only to marry his Fortune, or his Title, is the basest insincerity, and such as in any other kind of civil Contracts would not only have the infamy but the punishment of a Cheat. Nor will it at all secure them, that in this 'tis only liable to Gods Tribunal; for that is not like to make the doom less but more heavy, it being, as the Apostle witnesses, *a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb.* 10. 31. In a word, Marriage is Gods Ordinance, and should be consider'd as such, not made a stale to any unworthy design. And it may well be presum'd one cause why so few Matches are happy, that they are not built upon a right Foundation. Some are grounded upon Wealth, some on Beauty, too sandy bottoms God knows to raise any lasting Felicity on: whilst in the interim, Vertue and Piety, the only solid Basis for that Superstructure, are scarce ever consider'd. Thus God is commonly left out of the consultation. The Lawyers are resorted to to secure the Settlements, all sorts of Artificers to make up the Equipage, but he is neither advis'd with as to the Motives, nor scarce supplicated as to the event of Wedding. Indeed 'tis a deplorable sight to see with what lightness and unconcernedness young People go to that weightiest action of their Lives; that a Marriage-day is but a kind of Bacchanal, a more licens'd avow'd Revel; when if they duly consider it, 'tis the hinge upon which their future Life moves, which turns them over to a happy or miserable Being, and therefore ought to be enter'd upon with the greatest Seriousness and Devotion. Our Church advises excellently in the Preface to Matrimony; and I wish they would not only give it the hearing at the time, but make it their study a good while before: yea and the Marriage Vow too, which is so strict and awful a Bond, that methinks they had need well weigh every Branch of it e're they enter it, and by the ferventest Prayers implore that God, who is the Witness, to be their Assistant too in its performance. *The injustice of marrying for Fortune.*

SECT. II.

Of Wives.

1. AND now having conducted the Virgin to the entrance of another State, I must shift the Scene, and attend her thither also. And here she is lanch'd into a wide Sea, that one relation of a Wife drawing after it many others. For as she Espouses the Man, so she do's his Obligations also: and whereever he by ties of Nature or Alliance ow's a Reverence or Kindness, she is no less a Debtor. Her Marriage is an adoption into his Family; and therefore she is to pay to every Branch of it, what their Stations there do respectively require: to define which more particularly, would be a work of more length *The single relation of a Wife draws in many others.*

than profit. I shall therefore confine the present Consideration to the relation she stands in to her Husband, and (what is usually concomitant with that) her Children, and her Servants; and so shall consider her in the three capacities, of a Wife a Mother, and a Mistress.

The marriage debt to the person of a Husband.

2. In that of a Wife, her duty has several Aspects, as it relates, first to his Person, secondly to his Reputation, thirdly to his Fortune. The first debt to his Person is Love, which we find set as the prime Article in the Marriage-Vow. And indeed that is the most Essential requisite: without this, 'tis only a Bargain and Compact, a Tyranny perhaps on the Mans part, and a Slavery on the Womans. 'Tis Love only that cements the Hearts, and where that Union is wanting, 'tis but a shadow, a Carcass of Marriage. Therefore as it is very necessary to bring some degree of that to this State; so 'tis no less to maintain and improve it in it. This is it which facilitates all other duties of Marriage; makes the Yoke sit so lightly, that it rather pleases than galls. It should therefore be the study of Wives to preserve this Flame, that like the Vestal Fire it may never go out; and to that end carefully to guard it from all those things which are naturally apt to extinguish it: of which kind are all frowardness and little perverseness of humor, all sullen and morose behaviour; which by taking off from the delight and complacency of Conversation, will by degrees wear off the kindness.

Of avoiding Jealousy.

3. But of all, I know nothing more dangerous than that unhappy Passion of Jealousy; which though 'tis said to be the Child of Love, yet, like the Viper, its Birth is the certain destruction of the Parent. As therefore they must be nicely careful to give their Husbands no colour, no least umbrage for it; so should they be as resolute to resist all that occurs to themselves: be so far from that busy Curiosity, that industry to find causes of suspicion; that even where they presented themselves they should avert the consideration, put the most candid construction upon any doubtful action. And indeed, Charity in this instance has not more of the Dove than of the Serpent. It is infinitely the wisest course, both in relation to her present quiet, and her future innocence. The entertaining a jealous fancy, is the admitting the most treacherous the most disturbing inmate in the world; and she opens her breast to a Fury that lets it in. 'Tis certainly one of the most enchanting frenzies imaginable, keeps her always in a most restless importunate search after that which she dreads and abhors to find, and makes her equally miserable when she is injur'd, and when she is not.

The mischievous consequents of it.

4. And as she totally loses her Ease, so 'tis odds but she will part also with some degrees of her Innocence. Jealousy is commonly attended with a black train: it musters all the forces of our irascible part to abet its quarrel, Wrath and Anger, Malice and Revenge: and by how much the female impotence to govern those passions is the greater, so much the more dangerous is it to admit that which will so surely set them in an uprore. For if *Jealousy* be, as the Wise Man says, *the rage of a man*, *Prov.* 6. 32. we may well think it may be the Fury, the Madness of a woman. And indeed all ages have given tragical instances of it, not only in the most indecent fierceness and clamor, but in the solemn mischiefs of actual Revenge. Nay 'tis to be doubted there have been some whose malice has rebounded; who have ruin'd themselves in spight, have been adulterous by way of retaliation, and taken more scandalous liberties than those they complain'd of in their Husbands. And when such enormous effects as these are the issues of jealousy, it ought to keep women on the strictest guard against it.

What to be done in case of manifest falseness.

5. But perhaps it may be said that some are not left to their Jealousy and conjectures, but have more demonstrative proofs. In this age 'tis indeed no strange thing for men to publish their sin as *Sodom*, and the offender do's sometimes not discover but boast his Crime. In this case I confess 'twill be scarce possible to disbelieve him: but even here a wife has this advantage, that she is out of the pain of Suspence. She knows the utmost, and therefore is now at leisure to convert all that industry which she would have used for the discovery, to fortify her self against a known Calamity; which sure she may as well do in this as in any other; a patient Submission being the one Catholicon in all distresses; and as the slightest can overwhelm us if we add our own impatience towards our sinking, so the greatest cannot if we deny it that aid. They are therefore far in the wrong who, in case of this injury, pursue their husbands with virulencies and reproaches. This is, as *Solomon* says, *Prov.* 25. 20. *The pouring vinegar upon niter*, applying corrosives when balsoms are most needed; whereby they not only encrease their own smart, but render the wound incurable. They are not thunders and earthquakes, but soft gentle rains that close

the sciſſures of the ground; and the breaches of Wedlock will never be cemented by ſtorms and loud outcries. Many men have been made worſe, but ſcarce ever any better by it: for guilt covets nothing more than an opportunity of recriminating; and where the husband can accuſe the wives Bitterneſs, he thinks he needs no other apology for his own Luſt.

6. A wiſe Diſſimulation, or very calm notice is ſure the likelieſt means of reclaiming: for where men have not wholly put off Humanity, there is a native compaſſion to a meek ſufferer. We have naturally ſome regret to ſee a Lamb under the knife; whereas the impatient roaring of a Swine diverts our pity; ſo that Patience in this caſe is as much the intereſt as duty of a Wife.

The advantage of Patience.

7. But there is another inſtance wherein that vertue has a yet ſeverer trial, and that is when a Wife lies under the cauſeleſs jealouſies of the husband, (I ſay cauſeleſs, for if they be juſt 'tis not ſo much a ſeaſon for Patience, as for Repentance and Reformation.) This is ſure one of the greateſt Calamities that can befal a vertuous woman; who as ſhe accounts nothing ſo dear as her loyalty and honour, ſo thinks no infelicity can equal the aſperſing of thoſe, eſpecially when it is from him, to whom ſhe has been the moſt ſolicitous to approve her ſelf. Yet God, who permits nothing but what he directs to ſome wiſe and gracious end, has an overruling hand in this as well as in all other events of life; and therefore it becomes every woman in that condition, to examine ſtrictly what ſhe has done to provoke ſo ſevere a ſcourge. For though her heart condemn her not of any Falſeneſs to her husband, yet probably it may of many Diſloyalties to her God; and then ſhe is humbly to accept even of this traducing of her Innocence, as the puniſhment of her iniquity, and bear it with the ſame temper wherewith *David* did the unjuſt revilings of *Shimei*, 2 *Kings* 16. 10. *Let him curſe, for the Lord hath bidden him.*

Of cauſeleſs jealouſy towards the Wife, by the Husband.

8. And when ſhe hath made this penitent reflection on her real guilts, ſhe may then with more courage encounter thoſe imaginary ones which are charg'd on her: wherein ſhe is to uſe all prudent and regular means for her juſtification, that being a debt ſhe ow's to truth, and her own fame. But if after all the ſuſpicion remains ſtill fix'd (as commonly thoſe which are the moſt unreaſonable are the moſt obſtinate;) ſhe may ſtill ſolace her ſelf in her Integrity, and Gods approbation of it: nor ought ſhe to think her ſelf deſolate, that has her appeal open to heaven. Therefore whilſt ſhe can look both inward and upward with comfort, why ſhould ſhe chooſe to fix her eyes only on the object of her grief? and whilſt her own complaint is of defamation, why ſhould ſhe ſo diſhonour God and a good Conſcience, as to ſhew any thing can be more forcible to oppreſs, than they are to relieve and ſupport? And if ſhe may not indulge to Grief, much leſs may ſhe to Anger, and Bitterneſs.

The comfort of a reſort to God's righteous judgment.

9. Indeed if ſhe conſider how painful a paſſion Jealouſy is, her husband will more need her pity; who though he be unjuſt to her, is yet cruel to himſelf. And as we do not uſe to hate and malign thoſe Lunaticks, who in their fits beat their friends, and cut and gaſh themſelves, but rather make it our care to put all harmful engines out of their way; ſo ſhould the wife not deſpitefully ruminate upon the injury, but wiſely contrive to avert his temptations no more, by denying her ſelf even the moſt innocent liberties, if ſhe ſee they diſſatisfy him. I know there have been ſome of another opinion; and as if they thought Jealouſy were to be cured by majoration, have in an angry contempt done things to inflame it, put on an unwonted freedom and jollity, to ſhew their husbands how little they had ſecur'd themſelves by their diſtruſt. But this as it is no Chriſtian, ſo I conceive it is no prudent expedient: it ſerves to ſtrengthen not only the husbands ſuſpicion, but his party too, and make many others of his mind: and 'tis a little to be fear'd, that by uſing ſo to brave the Jealouſy, they may at laſt come to verify it. I have been the longer on this theme, becauſe as Jealouſy is the moſt fatal peſt of a married life, ſo I think it more ordinarily occurs among people of Quality, and with the worſt and moſt durable effects. Yet what ever pretences people may take hence, the marriage vow is too faſt a knot to be looſned by Fancies and Chimera's: let a woman therefore be the perſon ſuſpecting or ſuſpected, neither will abſolve her from that Love to her husband ſhe has ſworn to pay.

The torment of Jealouſy is a ſevere revenge on the injurious husband.

10. But alas what hope is there that theſe greater temptations ſhall be reſiſted, when we ſee every the ſlighteſt diſguſt is now adays too ſtrong for the matrimonial Love. Nay indeed it do's of courſe fall off of it ſelf; which is an event ſo much expected, that 'tis no wonder to ſee it expire with the firſt circuit of the moon; but 'tis every bodies admiration to ſee it laſt one of the ſun. And ſometimes it vaniſhes

Of parting upon little diſguſts.

nishes so clearly, as not to leave so much as a shadow behind it, not so much as the formalities of Marriage: one bed, one house cannot hold them, as if they had been put together like caseshot in a gun, only that they might the more forcibly scatter several ways. Nay as if this were design'd and intended in the first addresses unto marriage, a separate maintenance is of course aforehand contracted for, and becomes as solemn a part of the settlement, as a Joynture is. *Plutarch* observes of the ancient Romans, that for two hundred and thirty years after the founding of their State, there never was one example of any married couple that separated: it is not likely they could have a more binding form of marriage than ours is, the difference must lie between their Veracity and our Falseness.

The mischief of its being thought an unfashionable thing for a wife to be seen in her husbands company.

11. But even amongst those who desert not each other, too many do mutually fall from that entireness and affection which is the soul of marriage; and to help on the declination, there are fashionable Maxims taken up, to make Men and their Wives the greatest strangers to each other. Thus 'tis pronounc'd a piece of ill Breeding, a sign of a country Gentleman, to see a man go abroad with his own wife (I suppose those who brought up these rules are not to seek what use to make of them.) And were the time of most of the modish couples computed, 'twould be found they are but few of their waking hours (I might say minutes) together: so that if nothing else, meer desuetude and intermission of conversation must needs allay, if not quite extinguish their kindness. But I hope there are yet many who do not think the authority of a fashion greater than that of a vow: and such will still think it their duty both to own and cherish that kindness and affection they have so solemnly promis'd.

The debt of fidelity of the wife to the husband.

12. Another debt to the person of a husband is Fidelity: for as she has espous'd all his interests, so she is oblig'd to be true to them, to keep all his secrets, to inform him of his dangers, yea and in a mild and gentle manner to admonish him of his faults. This is the most genuine act of friendship; therefore she who is plac'd in the nearest and most intimate degree of that relation, must not be wanting in it. She that lies in his bosom should be a kind of second Conscience to him, by putting him in mind both of his duty and his aberration: and as long as she can be but patiently heard, 'tis her sin to omit it; 'tis the greatest treachery to his noblest, to his immortal part, and such as the most officious cares of his other interest can never expiate. Nay indeed she is unfaithful to her self in it, there being nothing that do's so much secure the happiness of a Wife as the Vertue and Piety of the Husband. Yet, though this is to have her chiefest care, as being his principal interest, she is to neglect none of the inferiour, but contribute her utmost to his advantage in all his concerns.

Particularly to his bed.

13. Beyond all these the matrimonial fidelity has a special notion as it relates to the Bed; and in that the wife is to be most severely scrupulous, and never to admit so much as a thought or imagination, much less any parly or treaty contrary to her loyalty. 'Tis true wantonness is one of the foulest blots that can stain any of the sex; but 'tis infinitely more odious in the married, it being in them an accumulation of crimes, perjury added to uncleanness, the infamy of their family superstructed upon their own. And accordingly all laws have made a difference in their punishments. Adultery was by Gods own award punish'd with death among the Jews, *Lev.* 20. 10. And it seems it was so agreeable to natural Justice, that divers other nations did the like; and I know no reason, but the difficulty of detection, that should any where give it a milder sentence. The son of *Sirach* has excellently describ'd the several gradations of the guilt, *Eclus.* 23. 23. which I shall desire the Reader to consult: which who so do's must certainly wonder at the Alchymy of this age, that from such a mass of shame and infamy can extract matter of confidence: that those who lie under so many brands and stigmas, are so far from hiding their faces, that none shew them with so much boldness, and the assurance of the guilty far exceeds that of the innocent. But impudence is a slender shelter for guilt, and serves rather to betray than hide: so that they are not able to outface the opinions of men, much less can they the judgments of God; who as he was solemnly invok'd as Witness to their Vow, so by his Omnipresence is against their wills a Witness too of its violations.

The duty of Obedience.

14. Another Duty to the person of the Husband is Obedience, a word of a very harsh sound in the ears of some Wives, but is certainly the duty of all: and that not only by their promise of it, though that were sufficient; but from an original of much older date, it being the mulct that was laid upon the first Womans disobedience to God, that she (and all deriv'd from her) should be subject to the Husband;

so

so that the contending for superiority, is an attempt to reverse that Fundamental Law, which is almost as ancient as the World. But surely God, with whom there is no shadow of change, will not make Acts of repeal to satisfy the petulancy of a few masterless Women. That Statute will still stand in force, and if it cannot awe them into an Observance, will not fail to consign them to Punishment. And indeed this fault is commonly its own lictor, and do's anticipate (though not avert) its final doom. The imperiousness of a Woman do's often raise those Storms, wherein her self is Shipwrack'd. How pleasantly might many Women have liv'd, if they had not affected Dominion? Nay, how much of their Will might they have had, if they had not strugled for it? For let a Man be of never so gentle a Temper (unless his Head be softer than his Heart) such a Usurpation will awake him to assert his Right. But if he be of a sowre severe Nature, if he have as great a desire of Rule as she, back'd with a much better Title, what Tempests, what Hurricanes must two such opposite Winds produce? And at last 'tis commonly the Wives lot, after an uncreditable unjust War, to make as disadvantageous a Peace; this (like all other ineffective Rebelions) serving to straiten her Yoke, to turn an ingenious Subjection into a slavish Servitude: so that certainly it is not only the Vertue, but the Wisdom of Wives to do that upon Duty, which at last they must (with more unsupportable Circumstances) do upon Necessity.

The duty of concern for the husbands reputation.

15. And as they owe these Severals to the person of the Husband, so there is also a debt to his Reputation. This they are to be extremely tender of, to advance it, by making all that is good in him as conspicuous, as publick as they can; setting his worth in the clearest light, but putting his infirmities in the Shade; casting a Veil upon those to skreen them from the eyes of others, nay (as far as is possible) from their own two; there being nothing acquir'd to the Wife by contemplating the Husbands weakness, but a temptation of despising him; which though bad enough in it self, is yet rendred worse by that train of mischievous consequences which usually attend it. In case therefore of any notable Imperfections in him, her safest way will be to consider them no farther than she can be instrumental to the curing them; but to divert from those, and reflect upon her own, which perhaps if impartially weighed, may ballance, if not overpoise his. And indeed those Wives who are apt to blaze their Husbands Faults, do shew that they have either little adverted to their own, or else find them so great, that they are forc'd to that Art of diversion, and seek in his Infamy to drown theirs. But that project is a little unlucky, for nothing do's in sober Judges, create greater prejudice to a Woman, than to see her forward in impeaching her Husband.

This is best shew, in a care of doing nothing which may redound to the husbands dishonour.

16. But besides this immediate tenderness of his Reputation, there is another by way of reflection, which consists in a care that she her self do nothing which may redound to his dishonour. There is so strict a Union between a Man and his Wife, that the Law counts them one Person, and consequently they can have no divided Interest, so that the misbehaviour of the Woman reflects ignominiously on the Man; it therefore concerns them, as well upon their Husbands as their own account, to abstain even from all appearance of evil, and provide that themselves be (what *Cesar* is said to have requir'd of his Wife) not only without guilt, but without scandal also.

The duty of the wife to the husbands fortune.

17. Another part of the Wives Duty relates to her Husbands Fortune, the management whereof is not ordinarily the Wives Province, but where the Husband thinks fit to make it so, she is oblig'd to administer it with her best Care and Industry; not by any neglect of hers to give others opportunity of defrauding him: yet on the other side, not by an immoderate tenacity or griping, to bring upon him and her self the reproach, and which is worse, the Curse that attends Exaction and Oppression. But this is not usually the Wives field of action, though he that shall consider the description which *Solomon* gives of a vertuous Wife, *Prov.* 31. will be apt to think her Province is not so narrow and confin'd, as the humor of the Age would represent it. He tells us, *That she seeks wooll and flax, and works diligently with her hands: that she is like the merchants ships, and brings her food from far.* That *she considers a field, and buys it, and with the fruit of her hands plants a vineyard,* &c. And lest this should be imagin'd to be the Character of a mean Country Dame, he adds, That *her houshold is clothed in scarlet,* and that *her husband sits among the elders of the land.* It were easy to give instances from History, of the advantageous menage and active industry of Wives, not only in single Persons, but whole Nations. But nothing can be more pregnant, than that among the Romans: in the very height and flourish of the Empire, *Augustus* himself *scarce wore any thing but of the manufa-*

ture of his wife, his sister, daughters, and neeces, as *Suetonius* assures us. Should the gay *lilies of our fields, which neither sow nor spin, nor gather into barns*, be exempted from furnishing others, and left to clothe themselves, 'tis to be doubted they would reverse our Saviours Parallel of *Solomons glories*, and no beggar in all his rags *would be arayed like one of these*, *Luke* 12. 27.

Not to spend in the ambition of cloths, jewels, and furniture.

18. But we will be yet more kind, and impose only negative thrift on the Wife, not to waste and embezle her Husbands Estate, but to confine her Expences within such limits as that can easily admit; a Caution, which if all Women had observ'd, many noble Families had been preserv'd, of which there now remains no other Memorial, but that they fell a Sacrifice to the profuse Vanity of a Woman; and I fear, this Age is like to provide many more such Monuments for the next. Our Ladies, as if they emulated the Roman Luxury (which *Seneca* and *Pliny* describe with so much indignation) do sometimes wear about them the Revenues of a rich Family; and those that cannot reach to that, shew how much 'tis against their wills they fall lower, by the vast variety and excess of such things as they can possibly compass; so much extravagance not only in their own Dress, but that of their Houses and Apartments, as if their vanity, like the Leprosie we read of, *Lev.* 14. had infected the very Walls. And indeed, 'tis a very spreading fretting one, for the Furniture oft consumes the House, and the House consumes the Land: so that if some Gentlemen were to calculate their Estates, they might reduce all to the Inventory of *Scopias* the *Thessalian*, who profest his All lay only in such Toies as did him no good. Women are now skilful Chymists, and can quickly turn their Husbands Earth into Gold: but they pursue the Experiment too far, make that Gold too volatile, and let it all vapour away in insignificant (though gaudy) Trifles.

The expence of the Town.

19. Nor is it ever like to be otherwise with those that immoderatly affect the Town, that Forge of Vanity, which supplies a perpetual Spring of new temptations. 'Tis true, there are some Ladies who are necessarily engaged to be there: their Husbands Employments or Fortunes have mark'd that out as their proper station, and where the ground of their stay is their duty, there is more reason to hope it will not betray them to ill, for temptations are most apt to assault straglers, those that put themselves out of their proper road. And truly I see not who can more properly be said to be so, then those Women whose means of subsistence lies in the Country, and yet will spend it no where but at *London*, which seems to carry something of opposition to Gods Providence, who surely never caus'd their lot to fall, as the *Psalmist* speaks, *in a fair ground, in goodly heritages*, *Psal.* 16. with an intent they should never inhabit them. The twelve Tribes of *Israel* had their peculiar Portions in *Canaan* assign'd them by lot, *Josh.* 14. 2. and every one acquiesced in his part, dwelt in his own Inheritance: had they been impatient of living any where but in the Metropolis, had they all crouded to *Jerusalem*, all the rest of the Land would have been as desolate before the Captivity as it was after, none would have been left but such as *Nebuzar-adan* permitted to stay, *Jer.* 52. 16. *some of the poor to dress the vines, and to till the ground.* And truly, the same is like to be the fate of this Nation, if this humor goes on as it has begun; which may in time prove as mischievous to the publick, as it daily is to private Families.

The obligations of the Gentry to the Country.

20. But besides this 'tis yet farther to be consider'd, that where God gives an estate, he as the supreme Landlord affixes something of duty, lays a kind of rent charge upon it, expects it should maintain both hospitality and charity; and sure both these are fittest to be done upon the place whence the ability of them rises. All publick taxes use to be levyed where the estate lies, and I know not why these which are Gods assesments upon it, should not be paid there too. When a Gentlemans land becomes profitable unto him by the sweat and labour of his poor neighbours and tenants, 'twill be a kind of *muzling the ox*, 1 *Cor.* 9. 9. if they never taste of the fruit of their pains, if they shall never have the refreshment of a good meal, or an alms; which they are not very like to meet with, if all the profits be sent up to maintain an equipage, and keep up a parade in Town. But alas, 'tis often not only the annual profits that go that way, not only the crop, but the soil too; those luxuries usually prey upon the vitals, eat out the very heart of an estate, and many have stay'd in the Town 'till they have nothing left in the Country to retire to.

The ruin of the family and posterity ow'd to the deserting the Country.

21. Now where this proceeds from the Wife, what account can she give to her Husband, whose easiness and indulgence (for that must be suppos'd in the case) she has so abus'd? as also to her posterity and family who for her pride must be brought low, reduc'd to a condition beneath their quality, because she affected to live above it? But she will yet worse answer it to her self, on whom she has brought not on-

ly the inconvenience but the guilt. 'Tis sure a lofty mind will feel smart enough of a fall, a diminution, much more an indigence will be sufficiently grievous to a vain and lavish humor; yet here it will farther have an additional sting from the conscience, that she ow's it only to her own pride and folly, a most imbittering consideration, and such as advances the affliction beyond that of a more innocent poverty, as much as the pain of an envenom'd arrow exceeds that of another.

22. But the saddest reckoning of all is that which she is to make to God, who has declar'd he hates robbery though for a burnt-offering to himself. How will he then detest this robbery, this impoverishing of the husband, when 'tis only to make an oblation to vanity and excess? It should therefore be the care of all Wives to keep themselves from a guilt for which God and man, yea and themselves also shall equally accuse them, and to keep their expences within such limits, that as bees suck but do not violate or deface the flowers, so they as joint proprietaries with the husbands, may enjoy but not devour and destroy his fortune.

The wives impoverishing her husband a manifold robbery.

23. I have now run through the duties to be perform'd unto the Husband, wherein I have not used the exactness of a casuist in curiously anatomizing every part, and shewing all the most minute particulars reducible to each head. I have only drawn out the greater lines, and insisted on those wherein Wives are most frequently deficient. I shall only add this caution, that whatever is duty to the husband, is equally so, be he good or ill. The Apostle commands subjection and fidelity, even to Heathen Husbands, 1 *Pet.* 3. 12. and 'tis now their defect either in Piety or Morality, that can absolve the Wife. For, besides the inconvenience of making her duty precarious and liable to be substracted upon every pretence of demerit, she has by solemn Contract renounc'd that liberty, and in her Marriage-vow taking him for better for worse; and it is too late *after Vows to make enquire*, *Prov.* 20. 25. to seek to break loose from that Bond of her Soul; and how uneasy soever the preverseness of the Husband may render it, he cannot thereby make it less, but more rewardable by God. For what the Apostle speaks in the case of Servants, is no less appliable to this, 1 *Pet.* 2. 19. *for this is thank-worthy, if for conscience towards God ye endure grief, suffering wrongfully.* Whatever duty is perform'd to Man with aspect on God, he owns as to himself; so that how unworthy soever the Husband may be, the Wife cannot misplace her observance, whilst she finally terminates it on that infinite Goodness and Majesty to whom no love or obedience can be enough.

The duties to be perform'd to the husband, must be paid to the bad as well as good.

24. From this relation of a Wife, there ordinarily springs another, that of a Mother, to which there belongs a distinct duty, which may be branched into many severals: but I shall at present only reduce them to two Heads, Love and Care. A Mother is a title of so much Tenderness, that we find it borrowed by our common Dialect to express the most exuberant Kindness; nay, even in Sacred Stile it has the same use, and is often set as the highest Example our weakness can comprehend of the Divine Compassions. So that Nature seems sufficiently to have secur'd the love of Mothers to their Children, without aid of any positive Law. Yet we find this, (as other Instincts of Nature) is sometimes violated, and oftner perverted and applied to mistaken purposes: the first is by a defect of Love; the other, by an imprudent excess of it: the defect do's, I presume, more rarely occur than the other; yet it doth sometimes happen, and that either from a morose sowrness of humor, or else from too vehement an intention on something else.

The duty of a wife as a mother.

25. Some Women have such a ruggedness of Nature, that they can love nothing; the ugly Passions of Anger and Envy have, like *Pharaoh*'s lean Kine, eat up the more amiable of Love and Joy. *Plato* was wont to advise crabbed austere Tempers, to Sacrifice to the *Graces*; and such as these had need have a great deal of Christian Philosophy, to allay and sweeten their native Bitterness. But there are others that are not void of the affection of Love, but 'tis forestall'd by some other Object, and so diverted from their Children. And 'tis a little to be doubted, those Objects which so divert are none of the best, for the Wisdom of God has dispos'd all duty into such a Harmony and Consent of Parts, that one interferes not with another. If we love no prohibited thing, all the regular Objects of our kindness will agree well enough, and one need never supplant another. And indeed 'tis oft observable, that those Women who immoderately love their own Pleasures, do lest regard their Children; they look on them as Clogs to keep them within doors, and think their adverting to them, will hinder their free range abroad; those are turn'd off to the care of a Nurse or Maid, whilst perhaps a Dog or a Monkey is thought worthy their own attendance.

Who had rather have a dog in their lap, than a Child.

26. *Plutarch* relates it as a Sarcasm of *Cesars* to some Foreigners whom he saw (at *Rome*) strangely fond of such little Animals, that he ask'd them, Whether the Women in their Country had no Children; thereby intimating, how unreasonable it was for those that had, to bestow their Caresses on such Creatures. And surely he would not have given a milder Reprimand to some of our Ladies, who not only please, but pride themselves in those little Brutes, shew them to all Comers, when perhaps you may converse with them divers days, before you shall, by any mention of theirs, know that they have a Child.

The fault of not nursing Children.

27. To this defect of Love, many are apt to impute the Mothers transferring the Nursing her Child to another. I am not forward to pronounce of it, being loth to involve so many as I then must in the imputation of unnaturalness; I rather think it is taken up as a piece of State and Greatness; for no other motive, but what is founded in their Quality, could so universally prevail with all that are of it. But sure this is one of the vain Punctillio's wherewith this Age abounds. For whatever rank the Mother is of, the Child carries proportion to it, and there is the same equality between the greatest Lady and her own Child, as is between the meanest Beggar and hers: though indeed if there were any condescension in it, the aversions of that ought not to outweigh the impulses of Nature, and the many advantages the Child may receive by taking its Nourishment whence it deriv'd its Substance. And therefore, though I will not be too positive in asserting the necessity, yet I confess, I cannot but look with reverence upon those few Persons of Honour, who have broke through an unreasonable Custom, and preferr'd the good of their Children before that fantastick priviledge of Greatness. And such must in all Justice be acknowledg'd to have given a much better evidence of their love to their Children than the others.

A fault noted by heathen writers and others.

28. There is in *A. Gellius*, in his fourteenth Book, so fine a Discourse on this subject, where *Favorinus* the Philosopher is introduced, perswading a Noble Lady, notwithstanding the usual Excuses, to nurse her Child; that nothing besides the length, could tempt me to omit the transcribing it: unless happily the little success, which a Noble Person of the same Sex here concern'd, I mean the Countess of *Lincoln*, in the Ingenious Book wrote by her, and call'd her Nursery, be a sufficient ground of despairing to convince by any thing that can be said. However, let these delicate ones consider the severe words of the Prophet, *Lament.* 4. 3. *The sea-monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel like the ostrich in the Wilderness, who is hardned against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear, because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding,* Job 39. 16, 17.

There may be a fault also in excess of love.

29. But as there may be a fault in the defect, so there may be also in the excess of love. God is the only unlimited object of our Love, towards all others 'tis easy to become inordinate, and in no instance more than in this of children. The love of a Parent is descending, and all things move most violently downwards: so that whereas that of children to their Parents commonly needs a spur, this of the Parent often needs a bridle, especially that of the Mother, which (by strength of feminine passion) do's usually exceed the love of the Father. Now to regulate this affection, she is to advert to these two rules, first that she hurt not her self by it, and secondly that she hurt not her children. Of the first she is in danger if she suffer that Human affection to swell beyond its banks, so as to come in any competition with the Divine. This is to make an Idol of her child, for every thing is so to us, which rivals the love of God in our hearts, and he who owns the title of a Jealous God, may be provok'd as well by the bowing our souls to a living image, as the prostration of our bodies to a dead. Accordingly we oft see the effects of his Jealousy in this particular. The doting affection of the Mother, is frequently punish'd with the untimely death of the Children; or if not with that, 'tis many times with a severer scourge: they live (but as it was foretold to *Eli*, 1 *Sam.* 2. 33.) *to grieve her eyes, and to consume her heart,* to be ruinous to themselves, and afflictions to their friends, and to force their unhappy mothers to that sad acclamation, *Luke* 23. 29. *Blessed are the wombs which bare not.*

Which if not extended to all, is partial to some.

30. And as this proves often true, when the dotage is general upon all the Children, so do's it oftner when 'tis more partial and fix'd upon any one: that Darling which she makes the only object of her Joy, usually becomes that of her Sorrow. It is an ordinary infirmity in Parents, to heap all their kindness upon one to the defrauding of the rest, and too many times upon very undue motives: a little excelling in point of Beauty turns the scales, when perhaps many more solid Excellencies

are the counterpoise. And surely this is not only unjust but irrational in the Parent: for all peculiarity of favour in a Superior should be dispenc'd either by way of Reward, or Encouragement; and neither of those ends can take place, where 'tis only the outward form that is consider'd. For that cannot be rewardable to which the party has contributed nothing; and the *Psalmist* will tell us, That *'tis God that hath made us, and not we our selves*, *Psalm* 100. 2. And as little room is there for the other end, that of encouragement. For as our Saviour tells us, *Matth.* 6. none can add a cubit to his stature, nor make one hair white or black: 'tis certain themselves cannot really do either, though by the aid of Artificial Hypocrisie they frequently appear to do both. But those are Arts which neither deserve nor want encouragement: the natural Beauty must have its increase from the same source whence it deriv'd its being. There is therefore no reasonable account to be given, why a Child should be preferr'd for any such exteriour excellency.

The only justifiable ground of partiality is their vertue.

31. The only justifiable ground of partiality to Children is their Vertue, for to that their own choice concurs, and so may intitle them to reward; and 'tis also in their power to advance; and so encouragements are not cast away upon them. Nay, the influences of those may extend farther, and provoke a vertuous emulation in the rest. But then the mother must so manage it, as to evidence that 'tis no inequality in her own inclination, but meerly the force of the others desert; not the Person, but the Goodness that biasses her: and when Vertue is known to be the only ingratiating Quality, they will at once learn the way to become hers, and Gods Favourites. And unless it be upon this one design, 'tis a very unsafe thing for a Parent to make any partial discrimination among Children, which is sure to tempt the more neglected, both to repine at her, and envy her Darlings. And oftentimes such seeds of rancor have been by that means sowed in Children, as have been hard to eradicate in their riper Years. Nor is the mischief less which she do's to her Fondlings, who besides that they are expos'd to the malice of the rest, are usually spoil'd by it, made insolent and untractable, perhaps their whole lives after: for where the Mothers affection is unbridled, commonly the Childs will is so too, her fondness superseding that discipline and correction, which should, as the Wise Man speaks, *bow down its neck from its youth.*

General indulgence is worse than partial.

32. And the like may be said where the indulgence is more universal to all the Children; which is in one respect worse than the partial, because it spoils more, not one or two, but all the brood. The doting love of a Mother blinds her eyes, that she cannot see their faults; manacles her hands, that she cannot chastise them, and so their Vices are permitted to grow up with themselves. As their Joints knit and gather strength, so do their ill habits, till at last they are confirm'd into an Obstinacy; so setting them in a perfect opposition to that Pattern they should imitate: for as Christ's childhood *increas'd in wisdom*, and the Divine Favour, *Luke* 2. so do theirs in all those provoking follies, which may avert both the love of God and Man. And alas what recompence can the little blandishments and caresses of a Mother make her Children, for such important, such inestimable mischiefs? So that she that will be really kind, must temper her Indulgence with a prudent severity, or else she eminently violates the second rule, by which she should regulate her love, and do's that to her Children, which *Jacob* fear'd from his Father, *Gen.* 27. *Brings a curse upon them, and not a blessing.*

Of the Mothers care of Children.

33. Indeed the best way of approving their Love, is by well discharging the other Branch of their duty, that of Care. Without this, all the most passionate raptures of Kindness are but an airy Apparition, a fantastick Scene, and will no more advantage a Child, than the whole Shambles in Picture can feed and nourish it. Now this care is not a temporary, momentary Duty, for some one critical instant; but is to attend the Child through the several stages of its Minority, *viz.* Infancy, Childhood, and Youth. The very first part of their Infancy, is a season only for those Cares which concern their Bodies, providing for their careful Attendance, and all other things conducing to the strengthning their Constitutions, and laying a foundation for future Health and Vigour. Which is their interest not only upon a Bodily, but upon an Intellectual account, the good temperature of the Body being a great aid towards the free operations of the Mind. And therefore *Socrates*, and other Philosophers much recommend to their Disciples the care of Health, as that which freed the Soul from many incumbrances in its pursuit of Knowledge: and it was the comprehensive Prayer of the Poet, *That the Gods would grant a sound Mind in a healthful Body.*

The inuring them to moderate hardships.

34. But this Health is not always the consequent of a very nice and tender Breeding, but is very oft overthrown by it; and if Ladies could but find in their hearts to try it, they would, I doubt not, find, that the inuring them to moderate Hardships, would much more conduce to the establishing and fortifying their Constitutions.

Of early institution.

35. Beyond all this, the care for their Exteriour is soon overtaken by a more important one, that of their Interiour, in the timing of which there seems to be a very common mistake in the World. We look upon the seven Years of Infancy, as the life meerly of an Animal, to be spent only in the entertainments of Sense: and as we use not to yoak Calves, or back young Colts, so we think our Children are for a while to be left at the same liberty, to have no restraint put on any of their Passions. Nay many times we excite and foment them, teach Children to be angry and envious, proud and sullen, as if we fear'd their Natural Propensions to all these were too faint, and wanted the help of Institutions. But surely this is a great and pernicious Error, and this supposing Children to be so long Brutes, is the way to make them so longer. The Patrons of Atheism make it a most constant Topick in the disparagement of Religion, that 'tis ow'd to the prejudices infused in the first Infancy: 'twere to be wish'd, that this Objection might so far be complied with, that the fear of God, the love of Vertue, and hatred of Vice, might have the first possession of the Soul; and they be made to moderate their Passions, as soon as they are in a capacity to have them excited and engag'd.

The discipline of punishment is safer than that of terrour.

36. And truly, if we will observe it, we may see very early dawnings of reason in Infants, which would sooner come to a brightness, if we would betimes set to the scattering of those Passions which eclipse and darken it. A Child will quickly be taught to know what pleases or displeases a Parent, and by a very little taste of Reward or Punishment will learn to do the one, and avoid the other: and when this is done, the Parent has gain'd the fundamental Point, *That of obedience*, and may superstruct on it what she pleases, and then 'tis her fault if the Child be not by easy and insensible degrees moulded into a right form. 'Tis at first all one to the Child, whether he name God in an Oath or in his Prayers; but a Mother by Punishing the one, and Rewarding the other, will quickly bring him to know there is a difference, and so proportionably in other Instances. As to the way of Discipline, it may not be amiss to observe, That when there is occasion for Severity, 'tis better to awe by actual Punishment than Terrour, and never to make use of Infinite and Invisible Affrightments, the beloved methods of Nurses and Servants, such as are the menacing of Sprights and Mormo's, and leaving in the dark, that frequently make dastardly and timerous Impressions, which a long Age scarcely wears off.

Stubbornness broken in infancy, will be the easier subdued in childhood.

37. A sober sense of things, is to be impressed by treatable means, and this will be done with most ease, both to the Parent and Child, the sooner 'tis set upon. The will of a tender Infant, is like its Limbs, supple and pliant, but time confirms it, and custom hardens it: so that 'tis a cruel Indulgence to the poor Creature, to let it contract such Habits, which must cost him so dear the breaking, or dearer if never broken. And if this early care be taken of the Infancy, 'twill much ease the next part, that of the Childhood; for where the Iron sinew in the neck is broken, where the native Stubbornness is subdued so early, the Yoke will sit easy, all succeeding parts of Discipline will come with more facility and profit. The care proper to this Age, is the instructing in all parts of useful Knowledge of which as the Divine, for the excellency both of its nature and its end, must be first ranked, so should it be first and most industriously cultivated, and by all endearing methods imprest, not only on the Understanding, but the Heart. Piety and Vertue should be propos'd to Children as the most amiable, as well as necessary things, and they should be invited not only to know, but love them.

The care of teaching not to be put off to Servants and Governesses.

38. This part of Learning is equally competent to both Sexes, and therefore when the Sons are remov'd from under the Mothers tuition, and sent to more publick places of Erudition, her Province is still the same as to her Daughters, to whom she should not only Preach, but exemplify it in her own Practice, no Precepts penetrating so much into Youth, as those that are so inforc'd. And in order to this, I should commend to Mothers, the being as much with them as they can, and taking the personal Inspection of them; not to turn them off wholly to Servants, no nor yet Governesses, but frequently themselves to examine how they proceed in the Speculative part of Knowledge, and no less frequently exhort them to the Practick.

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39. *Marcus Cato* would not let his Son learn of his Slave, as disdaining a Child should owe so considerable a benefit to so servile a Person; and if he thought the meer teaching of Grammar too great a charge for such a one, surely the whole Institution of Youth is a much greater, it being that on which, not only a few outward Accomplishments, but even their Eternity depends. The great *Cornelia*, Mother of the *Gracchi*, and *Aurelia* the Mother of *Augustus*, thought it worth their pains to be Governesses. And the truth is, the Soul of a Child is a little too precious a Trust to commit wholly to the diligence and care of a mercenary Servant. Or if they happen not to want those Qualifications, yet 'tis very possible they may Prudence, of which there is no small degree requisite to the Instructing of Youth, too great a remisness or severity being equally destructive in that Affair. And indeed, besides these immediate, there are some other collateral Benefits consequent to the Mothers performing that Office: 'twill bring her and her Children into an Intimacy and Conversation, give her an acquaintance with their several Capacities and Humors; for want of which, many Parents have err'd in their Conduct, one sort of Treatment being not fit for all Children, and the distinguishing that depending wholly on their discerning their particular Tempers, which cannot well be done without some converse with them.

Besides care there is prudence requisite in institution.

40. Besides, by this they will be witnesses how they dispose their Time, that they neither lose it by doing nothing, nor yet misemploy it by doing ill. And indeed there is scarce any part of the Parents care more important than this, Idleness being no farther remov'd from Vice, than a Cause is from its immediate Effect. Therefore if Children be permitted to trifle away their Time, they will soon learn to trifle away their Innocence also. So that 'tis highly necessary that they be provided of a succession of Employments, that by the variety they may be insensibly drawn on. Nay methinks, it might very well be contriv'd that their Recreations might sometimes consist of such ingenuous Exercises, that they may at once both play and learn.

If Children be permitted to trifle away their time, they will also their innocence.

41. There is yet another good effect of the Mothers presence with the Children (which is perhaps no less material than any of the former:) 'tis, that by this associating them with her self, she prevents the danger of worse Society. Children, if the Parents allow them not their company, are necessarily cast upon that of Servants, than which there is scarce a greater danger that attends Youth. For besides, that low sort of converse debases their Minds, makes them mean and sordid, it often corrupts their Manners too; Children usually not receiving more pestilent Infusions from any than such. Servants that desire to ingratiate themselves, and have no laudable quality whereby to do it, must first endeavour to ingratiate Vice to them, and then by their officious ministeries in that, have a ready way of introducing themselves into favour. Perhaps this will be thought to concern only the Masculine part of Children, and that the Female, who are commonly in a distinct Apartment, and converse only with their own Sex, are more secure. But I would not advise Mothers to depend too much on that, for they are no surer that their Daughters shall not converse with Men, nay Men of the meaner sort too, than that their Maids and attendants shall not do so. And when 'tis consider'd, how apt those are to entertain, if not to invite Amours, 'tis not very probable the Rooms where they quarter shall be inaccessible to those they affect. And it were much safer for Children to be in the most publick concourse of Men, than to be witnesses and observers of the private Intrigues of such Lovers. The memories of Youth are very tenacious, and if they once be tainted with any indecent thing, will be apt to recollect it, 'till at last perhaps they come to transcribe it. 'Tis therefore in this respect a very useful part of the Mothers care, to make her self company to her Daughters, to prevent the dangers of a more unequal and infectious Converse.

Children by being with the Mother are rescued from the Society of Servants.

42. But if this be useful in Childhood, 'tis no less than necessary in the next Period of their time, when they arrive near the growth and age of Women. Then indeed the Mother should not only make them her Companions, but her Friends, allow them such a kind, yet modest Freedom, that they may have a complacence in her Company, and not be tempted to seek it among their Inferiours. That the belief of their kindness may supplant the pretensions of those meaner Sycophants, who by little flatteries endeavour to screw themselves into their good opinion, and become their Confidents: than which there is nothing more mischievous, those private Cabals that are held with such, serving only to render them mutinous against their Parents; these Family Incendiaries, like those in the State and Church, still inculcating the one grand Principle of Liberty, a word so charming to our deprav'd

Such freedom to be allowed by Mothers, that Children may not shun their Company

Nature, and especially to Youth, that they should not be trusted with such Lectures. Besides those intimacies are often Introductions to worse; many scandalous Amours and unequal Matches having had their rise from them. It should therefore be the business of Mothers to prevent all such pernicious Leagues, by preingaging them in more safe Familiarities, either with her self, or some other, of whose Vertue she has reason to be confident.

The best security for Children is the fixing a true sense of Religion.

43. But the most infallible Security against this and all other Mischiefs, is the bringing them into an intimacy and conversation with their Maker, by fixing a true sense of Religion in their Hearts; if that can be effectually done, 'twill supersede all other Expedients. She that duly considers she is always in Gods presence, will want no other Inspector, nor will she much need Monitors, who attends to the advices of her own Conscience. Neither will it only tend to the securing her Innocence, but her Reputation too; it being one part of the Christian Law, *to abstain from all appearance of evil*, 1 *Thes.* 2. 2. *to do things that are of good report*, *Phil.* 4. 8. so that Piety is the one compleat armour to defend both their Vertue and Fame. And 'tis extremely necessary they should be furnish'd with it, at this Age especially, when they do at first enter into the World; which we may well look on as a taking the Field, considering how many Assaults they are there like to meet with; and if they go without this Armature, they may, none knows how soon, be incurably wounded: of which there want not many sad Instances, some whereof might probably have been prevented, had the Parent taken care to have better fortified them.

'Tis a perverse care to be solicitous for little outward accomplishments, when Christian are neglected.

44. And indeed 'tis not a little sad to see how much this their most important Concern is neglected. Many Mothers, who are nicely curious in other parts of their Daughters breeding, are utterly inconsiderate in this. They must have all civil Accomplishments, but no Christian. Those are excluded out of the scheme of Education, and by that means lie under the prejudice of being not only unnecessary, but ungentile, below the regard of Persons of Quality. 'Tis much to be fear'd, that this neglect toward their Children, is founded in a previous contempt of Piety in themselves; yet I suppose 'tis often increas'd by a little Vanity they have of seeing them excel in some of those exteriour Qualities, which may recommend them to the humor of the World, upon the improving whereof they are so intent, that more material things are over-look'd. And when those are acquir'd, the pride of shewing them betrays them to other Inconveniencies. The Mother oft not only permits, but incites the Daughter to the opportunities of boasting her Excellencies, sends her so oft abroad on that Design, that at last perhaps she cannot, when she would, keep her at home, as I believe too many have found experimentally true. In a word, this Interval between Childhood and Majority, is the most critical Point of a Womans Life, and therefore should be the most nicely and warily attended; and a Mother had need summon not only all her care and diligence, but her prudence too, well to discharge this part of her Obligation.

The cruelty of Parents imposition on their Children in Marriage.

45. I shall not insist more minutely upon Particulars: I have in the former Section spoken somewhat of what 'tis fit these young Virgins should do and avoid; and whatever by that, or by any more exact rule appears their interest or duty, 'tis the Mothers to see it be not neglected by them: but where Kindness alone will not prevail, to employ their Authority too, and by a discreet mixture of each, secure their observance by both the tenures of Love and Reverence. Yet I shall a little reflect upon one Particular I mention'd before, I mean that of Marrying where they have aversion; which though I there charg'd as the Crime of the Daughter, yet I must here say the original and more inexcusable guilt is usually in the Parents, who are sometimes such Idolaters to Wealth and Honour, that they Sacrifice their Children to them; a more barbarous Immolation than that to *Moloch*. For though that were very inhuman, yet it had this alleviation, that the pain was short: but a loathed Bed is at once an acute and a lingring Torment, nay, not only so, but a temptation too; so that 'tis a Tyranny of a most unlimited kind, extends its Effects even to Eternity: and sure that Mother must have very petrified Bowels, have lost all Natural Compassion, that can so impose on her Child.

Parents that have ill Children should consider how they have been accessaries.

46. I shall add no more concerning this relation of a Mother, but only one short Advice, That those who groan under the frustration of their hopes, whose Children by any scandalous misbehaviour become the Objects of their shame and grief, would soberly consider, whether it have not been some way owing to themselves, either by neglect in their Education, or by their own ill Example. 'Tis usually one, and sometimes both. They that upon recollection can assure themselves 'tis nei-

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ther, may bear the Affliction with much the greater cheerfulness; but they that cannot, I am sure ought to bear it with much the more Patience and Submission, take it as Gods Lecture of Repentance, and look on their Childrens faults as the product of their own. And because Satisfaction is an indispensible part of Repentance, they are with their utmost industry to endeavour the repairing those Ruins they have made, by recalling those to Vertue, who by their means have strayed from it. 'Tis true, the errors of Education, like a subtil Poison, do so mix with the Blood, so incorporate into the Humors and Manners, that 'twill be very difficult to allay their Effects; and therefore the less they are themselves able to do towards it, the more earnestly they must importune a Higher Power. He who divided the Light from the Darkness, can separate the Effects from the Causes; and as he restrain'd the natural property of Fire, in the case of the three Children, *Dan.* 3. so He only can rescue their Children from that destruction to which their negligence has expos'd them. But as to the influence their example has had, they may do something towards the redress of that, by setting them a new Copy, making their own change so visible, so remarkable, that they may have the very same means of reclaiming, which there was of seducing them. And this is a piece of Justice which seems to call aloud upon many Mothers. The irregularities of Youth could hardly have grown to the present height, had they not receiv'd warmth and shelter from the practice of their Elders, which do's at once give encouragement and take off restraints, the Mother losing not only her Authority, but her confidence to admonish, or reprove. With what face can she require that strict and severe modesty of a young Girl, which she who should be a Matron will not practice? or tie up the giddy wandring humor of Youth, within those bounds she thinks too strait for her own? and how ready a retortion will even Scripture it self afford for such an Imposer? *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thy self? Rom.* 2. 21. Let it therefore be the care of all Mothers to live a perpetual Lecture to their Children, so to exemplifie to them all Vertue and Piety, that they may contribute something to their Spiritual, as well as their Natural Life; that however they may at least deliver their own Souls, and not have their Childrens guilt recoil upon them as the unhappy originals of it.

47. The last relation of a Married Woman is that of a Mistress, the inspection of the Family being usually her Province; and though she be not Supream there, yet she is to improve her delegated Authority to the advantage of all under it. And her more constant residence gives her more opportunities of it, than the frequent avocations of the Husband will perhaps allow him. St. *Paul* sets it as the Calling, and indispensible duty of the Married Woman, *That they guide the house*, 1 *Tim.* 5. 18. not thinking it a point of Greatness to remit the menage of all Domestick Concerns to a mercenary House-keeper. And indeed, since it has been a fashionable thing for the Master to resign up his concerns to the Steward, and the Lady hers to the Governante, it has gone ill with most great Families; whilst these Officers serve themselves instead of those who employ them, raise Fortunes on their Patrons ruins, and divide the spoil of the Family; the House-keeper pilfering within doors, and the Bailiff plundering without.

The duty of a Wife as a Mistress.

48. Now to the well-guiding of the House by the Mistress of it, I know no better or more comprehensive rule, than for her to endeavour to make all that are hers, to be Gods Servants also. This will secure her of all those intermedial Qualifications in them, in which her secular Interest is concern'd, their own Consciences being the best spy she can set upon them as to their Truth and Fidelity, and the best spur also to Diligence and Industry. But to the making them such, there will need first Instruction, and secondly Discipline. It is a necessary part of the Rulers care to provide that none in their Family should want means of necessary Instruction. I do not say that the Mistress should set up for a Catechist or Preacher; but that they take order they should be taught by those that are qualified for the Employment. And that their furnishing them with Knowledge, may not serve only to help them to a greater number of stripes, *Luke* 12. 47. they are to give them the opportunities of consecrating it by Prayer and Devotion, to that end to have publick Divine Offices in the Family; and that not by starts or accidents (when a devouter Guest is to be entertain'd, and laid by when a profane) but daily and regularly, that the hours of Prayers may be fix'd and constant as those of Meals, and (if it may possibly be) as much frequented; however that towards it she give both Precept and Example.

The best way to be well serv'd, is to see that God be so.

A family should be the Epitome of a Church.

49. A Christian Family should be the Epitome of a Church: but alas how many among us lie under a perpetual Interdict, and yet not from the usurpation of any Foreign Power, but from the irreligion of the Domestick. One may go into divers great Families, and after some stay there, not be able to say that the name of God was mention'd to any other purpose than that of Blasphemy and Execration; nor a Text of Scripture, unless in Burlesque and profane Drollery. And sure we need not wonder at the universal complaint that is now made of ill Servants, when we reflect upon this ill government of Families. They that are suffer'd wholly to forget their duties toward God, will not always remember it towards Man. Servants are not such Philosophers that upon the bare strength of a few Moral Instincts they will be vertuous: and if by a customary neglect of all things Sacred, they are once taught to look at nothing beyond this World, they will often find temptation enough here to discard their honesty, as the most unthriving Trade. And indeed when the awe of Religion is quite taken off from the vulgar, there will scarce any thing else be found to keep them within any tolerable bounds; so that 'tis no less impolitick than profane to slacken that Rein.

The Governours of Families are responsible for the Piety of their Servants.

50. But it is not only the Interest, but the Duty of all that have Families, to keep up the esteem and practice of Religion in them. 'Twas one of the greatest Endearments of *Abraham* to God, *That he would command his houshold to keep the way of the Lord*, *Gen.* 18. 19. And *Joshua* undertakes no less for the piety of his Houshold than himself, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*, *Josh.* 24. 15. And sure 'tis but reasonable, that where we our selves owe an Homage, we should make all our dependants acknowledge the same. Besides, it is a justice in respect of them; for where we entertain a Servant, we take the whole Person into our care and protection, and are false to that undertaking, if we suffer his soul, the most precious part of him, to perish. And God, who keeps account even of his meanest Creatures, will not patiently resent such a neglect of those who bear his own Image, and were ransom'd with as great a price as their Masters were, *for there is no respect of persons with God*, *Eph.* 6. 9.

The necessity of discipline in a family.

51. But when Piety is planted in a Family, 'twill soon wither, if it be not kept in vigour by Discipline: nay, indeed to have Servants seemingly devout in the Oratory, and yet really licentious out of it, is but to convert ones House into a Theater, have a play of Religion, and keep a set of Actors only to personate and represent it. 'Tis therefore necessary to enquire how they behave themselves when they are off the Stage; whether those hands which they elevate in Prayer, are at other times industriously apply'd to work; or those mouths wherewith they there bless God, are not elsewhere fill'd with Oaths and Curses, Scurrilities and Revilings: in a word, whether that Form of Godliness be not design'd in commutation for Sobriety and Honesty. Indeed the Governours of Families ought to make a strict Inspection into the manners of their Servants, and where they find them good to affix some special mark of Favour, by which they may both be encouraged to presevere, and others to begin; but where they find them vicious, there as eminently to discountenance, severely to admonish them, and use all fit means for their reclaiming, and when that seems hopeless, to dismiss them that they may not infect the rest. *A little leaven*, saith the Apostle, *leaveneth the whole lump*, *Gal.* 5. 9. and one ill servant (like a perish'd tooth) will be apt to corrupt his fellows. 'Tis therefore the same in families that it is in more publick communities, where severity to the ill is mercy and protection to the rest; and were houses thus early weeded of all idle and vicious persons, they would not be so overgrown, nor degenerate into such rude wildernesses, as many (nay I fear most) great families now are.

Justice to Servants.

52. But as servants are not to be tolerated in the neglect of their duty, so neither are they to be defeated of any of their dues. Masters are to give to their Servants *that which is just and equal*, *Col.* 4. 1. And sure 'tis but just and equal that they who are rational creatures should not be treated with the rigour or contempt of brutes: a sufficient and decent provision, both in sickness and in health is a just debt to them, besides an exact performance of those particular contracts upon which they were entertain'd. *Laban* had so much of natural justice, that he would not take the advantage of *Jacob's* relation to him to make him serve him gratis, *Because thou art my brother, shouldst thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me therefore what shall thy wages be? Gen.* 29. 15. But alas now-a-days where Servants have been told, nay expresly articled for, their wages, 'tis with many no easy thing to get it: nay 'tis thought by some Masters an insolence, a piece of ill manners to demand it; and when they have worn out a servant, they either pay him not at all, or with the same

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protraction and regret, which they do their Tailors for the old Cloaths they have cast off. I fear there are many instances of this, especially among great Persons, it being a receiv'd Mode with too many of them to pay no Debts to those who are too mean to contest with them. But however they may ruffle it out with Men, it will one day arraign them before God as most injurious Oppressors; there being no Crime of that kind more frequently or severely branded in Scripture, than this of the detention of the Wages of the Servant and Hireling. Besides, this example of Injustice, wherein the Servant is passive, is often transcrib'd by him in acts of fraud and deceit, and he is apt to think it but an equal retaliation, to break his Trust where the Master breaks his Covenant; and when he once attempts to be his own Pay-master, 'tis not to be doubted will allow himself large Use for the forbearance of his Wages; so that the course is no less unprofitable to the Master, than unjust and dishonourable.

How far the Wife is therein concern'd.

53. I am not sure 'tis always in the Wives power to prevent this or any of the former faults in the menage of the Family. For her Authority being but subordinate, if the Husband who is supreme suspend her Power, he do's by that vacating her rule, take off the duty consequent to it; so that what I have said, can be obligatory to none that are so impeded: but to those who can either do it themselves, or perswade their Husbands to it, the omission will be their sin: all the profaness and disorder of the Family will be charg'd upon their account, if it came by their default.

The burthen of a multitude of Servants.

54. And this, methinks, is a Consideration that may much mortifie one usual piece of vanity, I mean, that of a multitude of Servants. We shall all of us find burthen enough of our own personal miscarriages, and need not contrive to fetch in more weight from others. And in Families 'tis generally observable, That the bigger they are, the worse; vice gains boldness by numbers, is hatch'd up by the warmth of a full Society; and we daily see People venture upon those Enormities in consort and in a croud, which they would not dare, did they think they stood single. Besides, the wider the Province is, the more difficult it is well to administer it; and in a heap of Servants many faults will scape undiscern'd, especially considering the common Confederacy there is usually among them, for the eluding of Discipline: so that what the Wise man speaks of not desiring a multitude of unprofitable Children, I think may be very well apply'd to Servants, whose unprofitableness usually increases together with their number. I have now run through the several Obligations consequent to the Married State, wherein even upon this very cursory View, there appears so many Particulars, that if they were all duly attended, Ladies need not be much at a loss how to entertain themselves, nor run abroad in a Romantick Quest after Foreign Divertisements, when they have such variety of Engagements at Home.

SECT. III.

Of Widows.

The Widow is not freed from all duties to a husband.

1. THE next state which can succeed to that of Marriage, is Widowhood, which though it supersedes those Duties which were terminated meerly in the person of the Husband, yet it endears those which may be paid to his Ashes. *Love is strong as death, Cant.* 8. 6. and therefore when it is pure and genuine, cannot be extinguish'd by it, but burns like the Funeral-Lamps of old even in Vaults and Charnel-houses. The conjugal Love transplanted into the Grave, (as into a finer Mold) improves into Piety, and lays a kind of sacred Obligation upon the Widow, to perform all offices of respect and kindness which his Remains are capable of.

To the body of the dead husband by a decent interment.

2. Now those Remains are of three sorts, his Body, his Memory, and his Children. The most proper expression of her love to the first, is in giving it an honourable Enterment; I mean not such as may vie with the *Poland* Extravagance (of which 'tis observ'd, that two or three near succeeding Funerals ruin the Family) but prudently proportion'd to his Quality and Fortune, so that her Zeal to his

Corps may not injure a Nobler Relict of him, His Children. And this decency is a much better instance of her kindness, than all those Tragical Furies wherewith some Women seem transported towards their dead Husbands, those frantick Embraces and caresses of a Carcass, which betray a little too much the sensuality of their Love. And it is something observable, That those vehement Passions quickly exhaust themselves, and by a kind of Sympathetick Efficacy, as the Body (on which their affection was fix'd) molders, so do's that also; nay often it attends not those leisurely degrees of dissolution, but by a more precipitate motion, seems rather to vanish than consume.

To the memory of the husband.

3. The more valuable Kindness therefore, is that to his Memory, endevouring to embalm that, keep it from perishing; and by this innocent Magick (as the Egyptians were wont by a more guilty) she may converse with the Dead, represent him so to her own Thoughts, that his Life may still be repeated to her: and as in a broken Mirror the refraction multiplies the Images, so by his dissolution every hour presents distinct Idea's of him; so that she sees him the oftner, for his being hid from her Eyes. But as they use not to Embalm without Odours, so she is not only to preserve but perfume his Memory, render it as fragrant as she can, not only to her self, but others; by reviving the remembrance of whatever was Praise-worthy in him, vindicating him from all Calumnies and false Accusations, and stifling (or allaying) even True Ones as much as she can. And indeed, a Widow can no way better provide for her own Honour, than by this tenderness of her Husbands.

In doing nothing low or indecent.

4. Yet there is another Expression of it, inferiour to none of the former, and that is, the setting such a value upon her relation to him, as to do nothing unworthy of it. 'Twas the dying charge of *Augustus* to his Wife *Livia*, ***Behave thy self well, and remember our Marriage.*** And she who has been Wife to a Person of Honour, must so remember it, as not to do any thing below her self, or which he (could have foreseen it) should justly have been asham'd of.

The last tribute to the husband, is paid him in his Children.

5. The last Tribute she can pay him, is in his Children. These he leaves as his Proxies to receive the kindness of which himself is uncapable; so that the Children of a Widow may claim a double portion of the Mothers love; one upon their Native right, as hers; the other, as a bequest in right of their dead Father. And indeed, since she is to supply the place of both Parents, 'tis but necessary she should put on the Affections of both, and to the tenderness of a Mother, add the care and conduct of a Father. First, in a sedulous care of their Education. And next, in the prudent managery of their Fortunes; an order that is sometimes unhappily inverted, and Mothers are so concern'd to have the Estate prosper in their tuition, that the Children cannot; whilst (by an unseasonable Frugality) to save a little Expence, they deny them the advantages of an Ingenious and Gentile Breeding, swell their Estates perhaps to a vast Bulk, but so contract and narrow their Minds, that they know not how to dispose them to any real benefit of themselves, or others. And this is one of the most pernicious Parsimonies imaginable. A Mother by this seems to adopt the Fortune, and abdicate the Child, who is only made the Beast to bear those loads of Wealth she will lay on, and which she evidently owns as the greatest Treasure, since in tenderness to that she neglects him.

Kindness is in nothing better shewn than in bestowing education.

6. Yet sometimes the same Effect springs from another Cause, and Children are ill bred, not because the Mother grudges the charge, but out of a Feminine fondness, which permits her not to part with them to the proper places for their education. Like *Jacob* to *Benjamin*, her Soul is so bound up in them, that she cannot lend them awhile even to their own most necessary concerns. And this, though not so ignoble a motive as the other, is of no less mischief, at least to her Sons, who being by it confin'd to home, are consequently condemn'd to be poyson'd (if with nothing else, yet) with the flatteries of Servants and Tenants, who think those the best expedient to secure their own station. And with these the young Master or Landlord is so blown up, that as if his Manors were the confines of the World, he can look at nothing beyond them; so that when at last he breaks loose from his Mothers arms, and comes abroad, he expects scarce to find his Equals, much less his Betters; thinks he is still to receive the same fawning Adorations which he was us'd to at home: and being possest with this insolent expectation, he will scarce be undeceiv'd, but at the price of many Affronts, nay, perhaps he may buy his experience with the loss of his life; by his ill manners draw on a Quarrel, wherein he finally perishes. That this is no impossible Supposition, some unhappy Mothers have found to their unspeakable affliction.

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7. 'Tis not to be denied, but there are also dangers consequent to the breeding Children abroad, Vice having insinuated it self even into the places of Erudition, and having not only as many, but the very same Academies with Vertue and Learning; so that the extream depravation of the times new states the Question, and we are not to consider which is best, but which is the least ill disposure of Children. And in that competition sure the home Education will be cast; for there they may suck in all the Venom, and nothing of the Antidote; they will not only be taught base things, but (as I before observ'd) by the basest Tutours, such as will add all the most sordid circumstances to the improving of a Crime; whereas abroad they are first not like to meet with any whose interest it is so much to make them Vicious. And secondly, they may (as ill as the world is) meet with many who may give them both Precepts and Examples of a better kind. Besides the Discipline used in those Communities makes them know themselves; and the various sorts of Learning they may acquire, will not only prove useful divertisement (the want of which is the great spring of mischief) but will, if rightly apply'd, furnish them with Ingenious and Vertuous Principles, such as may set them above all vile and ignoble practices. So that there seems a conspiration of motives to wrest the child from the relucting Mother, and to perswade her for a while to deny her self that desire of her eyes, that so he may at last answer the more rational desire of her heart.

Education abroad more advantageous than at home.

8. As to the other part of her Obligation, the managing of their Fortune, there is the same rule for her as for all other persons that have a Trust, *viz.* to do as for themselves; that is, with the same care and diligence (if not a greater) as in her own peculiar Concern. I do not say that she shall confound the property, and make it indeed her own, by applying it to her particular use: a thing I fear which is too often done, especially by the gayer sort of widows, who to keep up their own Equipage, do sometimes incroach upon their sons peculiar. And I wish even that (though bad enough) were the only case wherein it were done: but 'tis sometimes to make her a better prize to a second husband. She goes into another family, and as if she were a Colony sent out by her son, he must pay for the planting her there: indeed the oft repeating this injury, has advanc'd it now into a custom, and the management of the Minors estate is reckon'd on as part of the Widows fortune. But I confess I see not what there is in the title of a Mother, that can legitimate her defrauding her Child; it rather envenoms the crime and adds Unnaturalness to Deceit. Besides 'tis a preposterous sort of guilt. Orphans and Widows are in Scripture link'd together as objects of Gods and good mens pity, and of ill mens oppression, and how ill alas do's civil war look among fellow-sufferers? The Widow to injure the Orphan is like that uncouth oppression *Solomon* speaks of, *Prov.* 28. 3. *A poor man that oppresseth the poor, is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.* Such kind of rapines are as excessive in their degree, as prodigious in their kind: and I believe there are many instances of sons, who have suffer'd more by the Guardianship of their Mothers, than they could probably have done by the outrage of strangers.

Kindness to Children shewn in managing their Fortune.

9. How well such Mothers answer their Obligations to their dead Husbands, I must leave it to their own Consciences to discuss, I shall only offer them these steps of gradation by which to proceed. First that Injustice of any sort is a great sin, secondly that when 'tis in a matter of trust 'tis complicated with Treachery also, thirdly that of all trusts those to the dead have always been esteem'd the most sacred: if they can find any allay to these by the two remaining circumstances, that 'tis the trust of a husband, and the interest of a child, I shall confess them very subtil Casuists.

Failence herein is an injustice most highly aggravated.

10. I have hitherto spoke of what the widow ows to her dead husband; but there is also somewhat of peculiar Obligation in relation to her self. God who has plac'd us in this World to pursue the interests of a better, directs all the signal acts of his Providence to that end, and intends we should so interpret them. So that every great change that occurs, is design'd either to recall us from a wrong way, or to quicken our pace in the right; and a Widow may more than conjecture, that when God takes away the mate of her bosom, reduces her to a solitude, he do's by it sound a retreat from the lighter jollities and gayeties of the world. And as in compliance with civil custom she immures her self, sits in darkness for a while; so she should put on a more retir'd temper of mind, a more strict and severe behaviour, and that not to be cast off with her veil, but to be the constant dress of her Widowhood. Indeed that State as it requires a great sobriety and piety, so it affords many advantages towards it. The Apostle tells us, *that she who is married careth for the things of the World, how she may please her husband*, 1 *Cor.* 7. 34. There are

The duty of the Widow in respect of her self, a vacancy to Piety.

many things which are but the due compliances of a Wife, which yet are great avocations, and interrupters of a strict Devotion; when she is manumitted from that subjection, when she has less of *Martha's care of serving*, she is then at liberty to choose *Mary's part*, *Luke* 10. 42. She has her time and her fortune at her own command; and consequently may much more abound in the works both of Piety and Charity. We find God himself retrench'd the Wives power of binding her own soul *Numb.* 30. Her vows were totally insignificant without her husbands confirmation; but the Widow might devote her self to what degree she pleas'd, her piety has no restraint from any other inconsistent obligation, but may swell as high as it can. Those hours which were before her husbands right, seem now to devolve on God the grand proprietor of our time: that discourse and free converse wherewith she entertain'd him, she may now convert into colloquies and spiritual entercourse with her Maker; and that love which was only human before, by the change of its object acquires a sublimity, is exalted into divine, from loyal duty and conjugal affection becomes the eternal work and happiness of Angels, the ardour of a Cherubim. Thus may she in a higher sense verify *Sampson*'s riddle *Judges* 14. 14. *fetch honey out of a carcass*, make her Husbands Ashes (like those of the heifer under the law, *Heb.* 9. 13.) *her Purification*: his corruption may help to put on incorruption, and her loss of a temporary comfort may instate her in an eternal.

To dedicate as her self, so her fortune.

11. And as her self, so her fortune may also be consecrated: And indeed if she be, that will also: If she have made an escape out of *Egypt*, there shall not a hoof be left behind her, *Exod.* 10. 26. no part of her possessions will be assign'd to vanity and excess. She who hath really devoted her self to Piety, *fasted and prayed* with *Anna Luke* 2. 37. will also be *full of good works and alms-deeds* with *Tabitha*, *Acts* 9. 36. Thus she may be a mother when she ceases to bear; and though she no more encrease one family, she may support many: And certainly the fertility of the womb, is not so valuable as this of the bowels: Fruitfulness can be but a happiness, Compassion is a vertue. Nay indeed 'tis a greater and more certain happiness: a child is not brought forth but with pangs and anguish, but a work of Mercy is produc'd not only with ease, but delight. Besides, she that bears a Child, knows not whether it may prove a Blessing or a Curse; but Charity gives certain title to a Blessing, and engages the most solvent Paymaster, even God himself, who owns all such disbursments as a loan to him. *He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord: and that which he hath given, will he pay him again*, *Prov.* 19. 17.

The ancient charity of Widows.

12. There was in the Primitive Times an Ecclesiastical Order of Widows, which St. *Paul* mentions, 1 *Tim.* 5. whose whole Ministry was devoted to Charity. They were indeed of the poorer sort, fit rather to receive than give alms; yet the less they could do with their Purses, the more was requir'd of their Persons, the humbler offices of *washing the Saints feet*, the careful task of *bringing up children*, and a diligent *attendance on every good work*. And sure there is parity of Reason, that those who upon the score of their Wealth, exempt themselves from those Laborious Services, should commute for it by more Liberal Alms. In the warmth and zeal of Christianity, Women of the highest Quality performed both sorts of Charity, forgot their Greatness in their condescensions, yet assum'd it again in their Bounty; founded Hospitals, and yet with a *labour of love*, as the Apostle stiles it, *Heb.* 6. 10. disdain'd not sometimes to serve in them. But these are Examples not like to be transcrib'd in our days, Greatness is now grown to such an unweildiness that it cannot stoop though to the most Christian Offices, and yet can as little soar up in any Munificent Charities: it stands like *Nebuchadnezzars* Golden Image, a vast Bulk only to be ador'd.

The great advantages that Dowagers of great families and fortunes have to charities.

13. Now certainly, if any Women be qualified to avert to this reproach, it must be the Dowagers of great Families and Fortunes: they have none to controul their Visits to the sick and afflicted, or to resent a disparagement from their Humility, neither have they an account to give of their Possessions but God and themselves; to him sure they can bring none so like to procure them the Eulogy of *well done thou good and faithful servant*, Matth. 25. 21. as a Catalogue of their Alms. Nor indeed can they any other way dispose their Fortune so much to their own contentment; they may possibly cloy and satiate their senses, make provision for the flesh; but that no way satisfies their reason, much less their Conscience. The Soul, which is the superiour part, is quite left out in that distribution; nothing is communicated to it but the guilt of those dear bought Excesses. The only way it has to be a sharer in their Wealth, is by a charitable dispensing. The Poor are its Proxies as well as Gods, and though in all other respects we may say to the Soul, as the *Psalmist* do's to God,

Psal.

Psal. 16. 2. *my goods extend not to thee*: yet by this way, it becomes not only a partaker, but the chief proprietor, and all is laid out for its use. The harbouring an out-cast, builds it *an everlasting habitation, Luke* 16. 9. the clothing the naked, arrays it in *pure white linen, Rev.* 19. 8. and the feeding the hungry, makes it a guest *at the supper of the Lamb*, v. 9. Nay, it gains not only an indefeisible title to these happy Reversions, but it has a great deal in present possession, a huge rational Complacence in the right applying of Wealth, and doing that with it for which 'twas design'd; yet more, it gives a sensitive delight, nothing being more agreeable to human nature, than the doing good to its own kind. A seasonable Alms leaves a greater exultation and transport in the Giver, than it can ordinarily raise in the Receiver; so exemplifying the Maxim of our Blessed Lord, that it is a *more blessed thing to give than to receive, Acts* 20. 35. This indeed is a way to elude the severe denunciation of the Apostle, 1 *Tim.* 5. 6. *A widow that liveth in this pleasure, is not dead whilst she liveth*; but on the contrary, shall live when she dies; when she resigns her Breath, shall improve her being: the Prayers of the Poor, like a benign gale, shall assist her flight to the Region of Bliss; and she who has here cherish'd the afflicted Members, shall there be indissolubly united to their Glorious Head.

These advantages redeem Widowhood from being a forlorn estate.

14. And now methinks Widowhood, under this aspect, is quite transform'd, is not so forlorn, so desolate an estate as 'tis usually esteem'd. And would all Widows use but this expedient, thus devote themselves to Piety and Charity, it would, like the healing Tree, *Exod.* 15. 25. sweeten these Waters of *Marah*, render the condition not only supportable, but pleasant; and they would not need to make such affrighted, such disadvantageous escapes, as many do, from it. 'Tis true, the Apostles affirmation is unquestionable, that *the wife, when her husband is dead, is at liberty to be married to whom she will*, 1 *Cor.* 7. 39. But the advice he subjoyns is authentick too, *she is happier if she so abide*. She that may solace her self in the Society, in the Love of her God, makes an ignoble descent to Human Embraces; she that may purchase Heaven with her Wealth, buys a very dear Bargain of the best Husband on Earth. Nay indeed, upon a meer secular account, it seems not very prudent to relinquish both Liberty and Property, to espouse at the best a Subjection, but perhaps a Slavery: it a little resembles the mad Frolicks of freed Gally-slaves, who play away their Liberty as soon as they regain it.

Of second Marriage.

15. Marriage is so great an adventure, that once seems enough for the whole life: for whether they have been prosperous or adverse in the first, it do's almost discourage a second attempt. She that has had a good Husband, may be suppos'd to have his Idea so fixt in her Heart, that it will be hard to introduce any new Form: nay farther, she may very reasonably doubt, that in this common dearth of Vertue, two good Husbands will scarce fall to one Womans share, and an ill one will become more intolerable to her, by the reflections she will be apt to make on the better. On the other side, if she have had a bad, the smart sure cannot but remain after the rod is taken off; the memory of what she has suffer'd should, methinks, be a competent caution against new adventures. Yet experience shews us that women (though the weaker sex) have commonly fortitude enough to encounter and baffle all these considerations. It is not therefore to be expected that many will by any thing that hath or can be said be diverted from remarrying: and indeed she that do's not preserve her Widowhood upon the accounts foremention'd, may perhaps better relinquish it. St. *Paul* we see advises that those *Widows* who found no better employment *than going from house to house*, that grew by their vacancy to *be tatlers and busy-bodies*, 1 *Tim.* 5. 13. should marry again; it being the best way to fix these wandring planets, to find them business of their own at home, that so they may not ramble abroad to intermeddle with that of others. And the truth is they that cannot brook the retiredness and gravity which becomes a Widow, had better put themselves in a state that less requires it; and if they resolve not to conform their minds to their condition, to bring their condition to their minds; but in the doing that there will be some cautions very necessary to be observ'd. I shall reduce them to two, the one relating to the time, the other to the equality of the match.

A decency in point of time to be observ'd.

16. First in respect of time, common decency requires that there be a considerable interval between the parting with one husband and the choosing another. This has been so much observ'd by Nations that were at all civiliz'd, that we find *Numa* made it a law, that no Widow should marry under ten months, and if any did she was to sacrifice as for the expiation of a crime. And this continued in force many ages after, insomuch that when upon reasons of State *Augustus* found it useful to marry his sister *Octavia* to *Antonius*, nothing less than a decree of the Senate could

license the anticipating the time; so jealous observers were they of this point of Civility, that they thought the whole State was concern'd in the violation. 'Tis true we have no law in the case, but we have somewhat of custom, I know not how long we shall have, since the frequent breaches of it threaten quite to cancel it: yet a Woman that is tender of her honour will scarce give her example towards the rescinding it. The wounds of grief are seldom heal'd by any hand but that of time, and therefore too suddain a cure shews the hurt pierc'd not deep; and she that can make her mourning veil an optick to draw a new lover nearer to her sight, gives cause to suspect the sables were all without.

So also the equality of condition.

17. The next thing considerable is the equality of the match. Marriage is so close a link, that to have it easy 'tis good to have the parties as even proportion'd as may be. And first in respect of quality and fortune, 'tis to be wish'd there should be no eminent disproportion. Those that meet most upon a level, are least subject to those upbraidings that often attend a great descent of either party. It is therefore no prudent motive, by which some Widows are sway'd, who marry only for a great Title; who often do not meet with so much of obeisance from strangers, as they do with contempt from their husbands and his relations. There have been many examples of Lords, who have used rich, but inferiour, widows like spunges, squeez'd them to fill themselves with their wealth, and them only with the air of a big name. On the other side for a woman to marry very meanly and too much below her self, is rather worse; those kind of matches are ordinarily made in a transport of passion, and when that abates and leaves her to sober reflections, she will probably be so angry with her self, that she will scarce be well pleas'd with her husband. A state of subjection is a little sweetned by the worth and dignity of the ruler: for as it is more honourable, so 'tis also more easy, the serviler spirits being of all others the most imperious in command. And sure 'twill not a little grate a woman of honour, to think she has made such a one her Master, who perhaps would before have thought it a preferment to have been her servant. Nay farther, such marriages have commonly an ill reflection on the modesty of the Woman, it being usually presum'd that where the distance was so great, as to discourage such an attempt on his part, there was some invitation on hers. So that upon all accounts she is very forlorn who thus disposes on her self. Yet 'tis too well known such matches have oft been made, and the same levity and inconsideration may betray others to it; and therefore 'tis their concern well to ballast their minds and to provide that their Passion never get the ascendant over their Reason.

As also equality of judgment in Religion.

18. Another very necessary equality is that of their judgment as to Religion. I do not mean that they are to catechize each other as to every minute speculative point; but that they be of the same profession, so as to joyn together in the worship of God. It is sure very uncomfortable that those who have so closely combin'd all their other interests, should be disunited in the greatest; that one Church cannot hold them, whom one house, one bed do's; and that religion which is in it self the most uniting thing, should be the only disagreement between them. I know 'tis oft made a compact in such matches, that neither shall impose their opinion upon the other: yet I doubt 'tis seldom kept, unless it be by those whose carelesness of all religion abates their zeal to any one. But where they have any earnestness in their way, especially where one party thinks the other in a damnable error, 'twill scarce be possible to refrain endeavouring to reduce them; and that endeavour begets disputes, those disputes heats, those heats disgusts, and those disgusts perpahs end in aversion; so that at last their affections grow as unreconcilable as their opinions, and their religious jars draw on domestick. Besides if none of these personal debates happen, yet the education of the children will be matter of dispute; the one parent will still be countermining the other, each seeking to recover the others proselytes. Nay it introduces faction into the inferiour parts of the family too: the servants according to their different perswasions bandy into leagues and parties; so that it endangers, if not utterly destroys all concord in families: and all this train of mischiefs should methinks be a competent prejudice against such matches.

Also equality in years.

19. There is yet a third particular wherein any great disproportion is much to be avoided, and that is in Years. The humors of youth and age differ so widely, that there had need be a great deal of skill to compose the discord into a harmony. When a young Woman marries an old man, there are commonly jealousies on the one part and loathings on the other, and if there be not an eminent degree of discretion in one or both, there will be perpetual disagreements. But this is a case that do's not often happen among those I now speak to: for though the avarice of

Parents

Parents sometimes forces maids upon such matches, yet Widows who are their own choosers seldom make such elections. The inequality among them commonly falls on the other side, and old women marry young men. Indeed any marriage is in such a folly and dotage. They who must suddenly make their beds in the dust, what should they think of a nuptial couch? And to such the answer of the Philosopher is appposite, who being demanded what was the fittest time for marrying, replied, for the young not yet, for the old not at all.

20. But this dotage becomes perfect frenzy and madness when they choose young husbands: this is an accumulation of absurdities and contradictions. The Husband and the Wife are but one person; and yet at once young and old, fresh and wither'd. 'Tis a reversing the decrees of nature: and therefore 'twas no ill answer which *Dionysius* the Tyrant gave his Mother, who in her age design'd such a match, That though by his regal power he could dispence with positive laws, yet he could not abrogate those of nature, or make it fit for her an old Woman to marry a young Man. 'Tis indeed an inversion of seasons, a confounding the Kalender, making a mungrel month of *May* and *December*: and the conjunction proves as fatal as it is prodigious; it being scarce ever seen that such a match proves tolerably happy. And indeed 'tis not imaginable how it should; for first 'tis to be presum'd she that marries so must marry meanly, no young man who do's not need her fortune will take her person. For though some have the humor to give great rates for inanimate antiquities, yet none will take the living gratis. Next she never misses to be hated by him she marries: he looks on her as his rack and torment, thinks himself under the lingring torture devis'd by *Mezentius*, a living body tied to a dead. Nor must she think to cure this by any the little adulteries of art: she may buy beauty, and yet can never make it her own; may paint, yet never be fair. 'Tis like enameling a mud-wall, the coursness of the ground will spoil the varnish; and the greatest exquisitness of dress serves but to illustrate her native blemishes. So that all she gains by this is to make him scorn as well as abhor her.

The accumulated absurdities of disproportioned marriage.

21. Indeed there is nothing can be more ridiculous, than an old Woman gaily set out; and it was not unaptly said of *Diogenes* to such a one, If this decking be for the living, you are deceiv'd; if for the dead, make haste to them: and I doubt many young husbands will be ready to say as much. Nay because death comes not quick enough to part them, there is few have patience to attend its loitering pace: the man bids adieu to the Wife though not to her fortune, takes that to maintain his luxuries elsewhere, allows her some little annuity, and makes her a pensioner to her own estate. So that he has his design, but she none of hers: he married for her fortune, and he has it; she for his person, and has it not: and which is worse buys her defeat with the loss of all, he commonly leaving her as empty of money as he found her of wit.

And no less miseries attending it.

22. And truly this is a condition deplorable enough, and yet usually fails even of that comfort which is the last reserve of the miserable, I mean Pity. 'Tis the Wise man's question, *Eccles.* 12. 13. *Who will pity a charmer that is bitten with a Serpent?* He might have presum'd less on his skill, and kept himself at a safer distance: and sure the like may be said of her. Alas what are her feeble charms, that she should expect by them to fix the giddy appetites of youth? And since she could so presume without sense, none will regret that she should be convinc'd by smart. Besides, this is a case wherein there have been a multitude of unhappy Presidents which might have caution'd her. He that accidentally falls down an undiscover'd precipice is compassionated for his disaster; but he that stands a great while on the brink of it, looks down and sees the bottom strew'd with the mangled carcasses of many that have thence fallen; if he shall deliberately cast himself into their company, the blame quite extinguishes the pity; he may astonish, but not melt the beholders. And truly she who casts her self away in such a match, betrays not less, but more wilfulness. How many ruins of unhappy women present themselves to her, like the wracks of old vessels, all split upon this rock? And if she will needs steer her course purposely to do the same, none ought to grudge her the shipwrack she so courts.

Which yet are unpitied.

23. Nor has she only this negative discomfort to be depriv'd of pity, but she is loaded with censures and reproach. The World is apt enough to malicious errors, to fix blame where there is none, but 'tis seldom guilty of the charitative, do's not overlook the smallest appearance of evil, but generally puts the worst construction on any act, that it will with any probability bear; and according to that measure women in this condition can expect no very mild descants on them. Indeed such

And loaded with censure and reproach.

matches are so destitute of any rational Plea, that 'tis hard to derive them from any other motive than the sensitive. What the common conjectures are in that case, is as needless as it is unhandsome to declare: I will not say how true they are, but if they be, it adds another reason to the former, why such Marriages are so improsperous. All distortions in Nature are usually ominous; and sure such preternatural heats in Age, may very well be reckon'd as dismal Presages, and very certain ones too, since they create the ruin they foretell. And truly 'tis not only just, but convenient, that such Motives should be attended with such Consequences; that the Bitterness of the one, may occasion some reflexion on the Sordidness of the other. 'Tis but kindly, that such an Alhallontide-Spring should meet with Frosts, and the unpleasantness of the Event chastise the ugliness of the Design; and therefore I think those that are conscious of the one, should be so far from murmuring, that they should be very thankful for the other: think it Gods discipline to bring them again to their Wits, and not repine at that smart which themselves have made necessary.

A strange fury in women when their estates might be employed to the best uses of Charity, only buy with them slavery and beggary.

24. And now I wish all the Ancienter Widows, would seriously weigh how much 'tis their Interest not to sever those two Epithets; that of Ancient they cannot put off, it daily grows upon them; and that of Widow is sure a more porportionable adjunct to it, than that of Wife; especially when it is to one to whom her Age might have made her Mother. There is a Veneration due to Age, if it be such as disowns not it self: *The hoary head*, says *Solomon*, *is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness*, *Prov.* 16. 32. but when it will mix it self with Youth, it is disclaim'd by both, becomes the shame of the Old, and the scorn of the Young. What a strange fury is it then which possesses such Women, that when they may dispose their Fortunes to those Advantageous Designs before mention'd, they should only buy with them, so undecent, so ridiculous a slavery? that when they may keep up the reputation of Modesty and Prudence, they should expose themselves to an Universal Contempt for the want of both; and that they who might have had a Reverence, put themselves even out of the capacity of bare Compassion.

This misfortune is generally founded in affectation of youth and gaiety.

25. This is so high a Frenzy, as sure cannot happen in an instant; it must have some preparatory degrees, some rooting in the constitution and habit of the mind: Such Widows have sure some lightness of humor, before they can be so giddy in their Brains, and therefore these that will secure themselves from the Effect, must substract the Cause; if they will still be wishing themselves young, 'tis odds but within a while they will perswade themselves they are so. Let them therefore content themselves to be old, and as Fashions are varied with Times, so let them put on the Ornaments proper to their Season; which are Piety, Gravity, and Prudence. These will be not only their Ornament, but their Armour too; this will gain them such a Reverence, that will make it as improbable they should be assaulted, as impossible they should assault. For I think one may safely say, It is the want of one or all of those, which betrays Women to such Marriages.

And will be matter of caution to younger Widows.

26. And indeed it may be a matter of Caution, even to the younger Widows, not to let themselves too much loose to a light frolick Humor, which perhaps they will not be able to put off, when it is most necessary they should. It will not much invite a sober Man to marry them while they are young; and if it continue with them till they are old, it may (as Natural Motions use) grow more violent toward its end: precipitate them into that ruinous Folly we have before consider'd. Yet, should they happen to escape that, should it not force them from their Widowhood, it will sure very ill agree with it: for how preposterous is it for an Old Woman to delight in Gauds and Trifles, such as were fitter to entertain her Grand-children? to read Romances with spectacles, and be at Masks and Dancings, when she is fit only to act the Anticks? These are contradictions to Nature, the tearing off her Marks, and where she has writ fifty or sixty, to lessen (beyond the proportion of the unjust Steward) and write sixteen. And those who thus manage their Widow-hood, have more reason to bewail it at last than at first, as having more experimentally found the mischief of being left to their own Guidance. It will therefore concern them all to put themselves under a safer Conduct, by an assiduous Devotion to render themselves up to the leading of the one infallible Guide, who, if he be not a *covering of the eyes*, *Gen.* 20. 16. to preclude all second Choices, may yet be *a light to them* for discerning who are fit to be chosen; that if they see fit to use their liberty and Marry, they may yet take the Apostles restriction with it, 1 *Cor.* 7. 40. that *it be only in the Lord*. Upon such sober Motives, and with such due Circumstances as may approve it to Him, and render it capable of his Benediction.

The Close.

The best means to secure in any of the before-mention'd particular estates, is to be furnish'd with the general vertues.

I HAVE now gone through both Parts of the propos'd Method. The former has presented those Qualifications which are equally necessary to every Woman: These, as a Root, send sap and vigour to the distinct Branches, animate and impregnate the several successive States through which she is to pass. He that hath pure Ore or Bullion, may cast it into what Form best fits his use, nay may translate it from one to another; and she who has that Mine of Vertues, may furnish out any Condition; her being good in an absolute consideration, will certainly make her so in a relative. On the other side, she who has not such a Stock, cannot keep up the Honour of any State; like corrupted Liquor, empty it from one Vessel to another, it still infects and contaminates all. And this is the cause that Women are alike complain'd of under all Forms, because so many want this Fundamental Vertue: were there more good Women, there would be more modest Virgins, loyal and obedient Wives, and sober Widows.

Therefore the Readers of this Tract are not to content themselves with what refers to their condition.

2. I must therefore intreat those who will look on this Tract, not only to single out that part which bears their own Inscription, but that they think themselves no less concern'd in that which relates indefinitely to their Sex; endeavour to possess themselves of those Excellencies, which should be as universal as their Kind: and when they are so stor'd with Matter, they may leave Providence to diversifie the Shape, and to assign them their Scene of Action.

Nor barely with what they read, but draw out consequences for themselves.

3. And now, would God it were as easy to perswade, as it is to propose; and that this Discourse may not be taken only as a Gazet for its newness, and discarded as soon as read; but that it may at least advance to the honour of an Almanack, be allowed one Year e're it be out of date: and in that time, if frequently and seriously consulted, it may perhaps awaken some Ladies from their stupid Dreams, convince them that they were sent into the World for nobler purposes, than only to make a little Glittering in it; like a Comet, to give a blaze, and then disappear. And truly, if it may Operate but so far as to give them an effective sense of that, I shall think it has done them a considerable Service. They may, I am sure, from that Principle, deduce all necessary Consequences, and I wish they would but take the pains to draw the Corollaries; for those Inductions they make to themselves, would be much more efficacious than those which are drawn to their hands. Propriety is a great endearment, we love to be Proselytes to our selves; and People oft resist others Reasons, who would upon meer partiality pay reverence to their own.

Which will give the collateral advantage of using the mind to consider.

4. But besides this, there would be another Advantage, if they could be but got to a custom of considering, by it they might insensibly undermine the grand Instrument of their ruin. That careless incogitancy, so remarkably frequent among all, and not least among Persons of Quality, is the source of innumerable Mischiefs; 'tis the *Delilah* that at once lulls and betrays them; it keeps them in a perpetual Sleep, binds up their Faculties, so that, though they are not extinct, yet they become useless. *Plato* used to say, *That a man asleep was good for nothing*: and 'tis certainly no less true of this Moral drousiness than the Natural. And as in Sleep the fancy only is in motion, so these inconsiderate Persons, do rather dream than discourse, entertain little trifling Images of things, which are presented by their Senses, but know not how to converse with their Reason. So that in this drousy state, all temptations come on them with the same advantage, with that of *a thief in the night*: a Phrase by which the Scripture expresses the most inevitable unforeseen danger, 1 *Thess.* 5: 2. We read in *Judges*, how easily *Laish* became a prey to a handful of Men, meerly because of this supine negligent humor of the Inhabitants, which had cut them off from all entercourse with any who might have succour'd them *Judges* 18. 27, 28. and certainly it gives no less opportunity to our Spiritual Assailants, leaves us naked and unguarded to receive all their Impressions. How prodigious a thing is it then, that this state of dulness and danger should be affectedly chosen? yet we see it too often is, even by those whose Qualities and Education fit them for more Ingenious Elections; nay, which is yet more riddle, that very aptness disenables, sets them above what it prepares them for. Labour is look'd on as utterly incompatible with Greatness, and Consideration is look'd on as a labour of the mind; and there are some Ladies, who seem to reckon it as their Prerogative, to be exempted from both; will no more apply their Understandings to any serious Discus-

sion, than their Hands to the Spindle and Distaff; the one they think pedantick, as the other is mean. In the mean time, by what strange measures do they proceed? They look on Idiots as the most deplorable of Creatures, because they want reason, and yet make it their own excellence and preeminence, to want the use of it; which is indeed so much worse than to want the thing, as sloth is worse than poverty, a moral defect than a natural. But we may see by this, how much civil and sacred Estimates differ: for we find the *Bereans* commended, not only as more diligent, but as more noble too, *Acts* 17. 11. because they attentively *consider'd*, and strictly examin'd the *Doctrine preach'd to them*. By which they may discern, that in Gods Court of Honour, a stupid Oscitancy is no enobling Quality, however it comes to be thought so in theirs.

Consideration would secure innocence.

5. And if this one point might be gain'd, if they would but so far actuate their Reason, as deliberately and duly to weigh their Interest, they would find that so strictly engaging them to all that is Vertuous, that they must have a very invincible resolution for ruin, if that cannot perswade them: and I hope all women are not Medea's, whom the Poet brings in avowing the horridness of that fact, which yet she resolv'd to execute. They are generally rather timorous, and apt to start at the apprehension of danger; let them but see a serpent though at a great distance, they will need no homilies or lectures to be perswaded to fly it. And sure did they but clearly discern what a sting there is in those vicious follies they embrace, their fear would make them quit their hold; put them in such a trembling, as would like that of *Belshazzars*, slacken their joints, and make those things drop from them, which before they most tenaciously grasped. For indeed in sin there is a conspiration of all that can be dreadful to a rational being, so that one may give its compendium by the very reverse of that which the Apostle gives of Godliness, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. for as the one *has the promises*, so the other has the curses *of this life, and of that which is to come.*

Would assist conscience in doing its work.

6. In this life every deprav'd act (much more habit) has a black shadow attending it; it casts one inward upon the conscience in uncomfortable upbraidings and regrets. 'Tis true indeed some have the art to disguise that to themselves by casting a yet darker over it; suppressing all those reluctings by an industrious stupefaction; making their souls so perfect night, that they cannot see those black images their Consciences represent. But as this renders their condition but the more wretched; so neither can they blind others though they do themselves. Vice casts a dark shadow outwards too, not such as may conceal but betray its self: and as the evening shadows increase in dimension, grow to a monstrosity and disproportion; so the longer any ill habit is continued, the more visible, the more deform'd it appears, draws more observation and more censure.

Would shew the wretched consequents of vice.

7. 'Twere indeed endless to reckon up the temporal evils to which it exposes its votaries; Immodesty destroys their Fame, a vain Prodigality their fortune, Anger makes them mad, Pride hateful, Levity renders them despis'd, Obstinacy desperate, and Irreligion is a complication of all these, fills up their measure both of guilt and wretchedness. So that had Vertue no other advocate, her very Antagonist would plead for her: the miserable consequences of vice, would like the flames of *Sodom* send all considering persons to that little *Zoar*, which how despicable soever it may have appear'd before, cannot but look invitingly when safety is inscrib'd on its gates.

The future account in another world.

8. But it must infinitely more do so if they please to open a visto into the other World, make use of divine perspectives to discren those distant objects which their grosser senses do here intercept. There they may see the dismal Catastrophe of their Comedies, the miserable inversion of all unlawful or unbounded pleasures: there that Prophetick menace concerning *Babylon* which we find *Rev.* 18. 7. will be literally verified upon every unhappy soul, *According as she exalted her self and lived delicately, so much the more tribulation give her*; the torment of that life will bear proportion to the pride and luxuries of this. It will therefore be necessary for those who here wallow in pleasures, to confront to them the remembrance of those rivers of Brimstone, and ask themselves the Prophets question, *who can dwell with everlasting burnings?* We find *Esay*, when he denounces but temporal judgments against the daughters of *Zion*, he exactly pursues the Antithesis, and to every part of their effeminate delicacy he opposes the direct contrary hardship, instead of *sweet smells there shall be a stink, instead of a girdle a rent, instead of well set hair baldness, instead of a stomacher a girding with sackcloth, and burning instead of beauty*, *Isaiah* 3. 24.

9. It

9. It were well the daughters of our *Zion* would copy out this lecture, and prudently foresee how every particular sin or vanity of theirs will have its adapted punishment in another World. And sure this consideration well digested, must needs be a forcible expedient to cleanse them from all *filthiness of flesh and spirit*, as the Apostle speaks, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. For is it possible for her to cherish and blow up her libidinous flames here, who considers them but as the first kindlings of those inextinguishable ones hereafter? Can she make it her study to please her appetite, that remembers that *Dives*'s unintermitted feast ends in as unallied a thirst? Or can she deny the crumbs of her table to that *Lazarus*, to whom she foresees she shall then supplicate for a drop of water? In fine can she lay out her whole industry, her fortune, nay her ingenuity too, in making provision for the flesh, who considers that that flesh will more corrupt by pampering, and breed the worm that never dies? Certainly no woman can be so desperately daring, as thus to attack damnation, resist her reason and her sense, only that she may ruin her soul; and unless she can do all this, her foresight will prove her escape, and her viewing the bottomless pit in Landskip and Picture will secure her from a real descent into it.

And punishments that will never end.

10. But now that this Tract may not make its exit in the shape of a Fury, bring the meditations to hell and there leave them, it must now at last shift the Scene, and as it has shew'd the blackness of vice by that outer darkness to which it leads, we also will let in a beam of the Celestial light to discover the beauty of Virtue; remind the reader that there is a region of joy as well as a place of torment, and Piety and Vertue is that milky way that leads to it; a state, compar'd to which the Elysium of the heathen is as inconsiderable as it is fictitious, the Mahometan Paradise as flat and insipid as it is gross and brutish; where the undertaking of the Psalmist shall be compleatly answer'd, those *that fear the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good*, *Psalm* 34. 10. And this happy state is as accessible as excellent. God is not unsincere in his proposals, offers not these glories only to Tantalize and abuse us, but to animate and encourage mankind. He sets up an inviting prize, and he not only marks out, but levels the way to it; makes that our duty which is also our pleasure, yea and our honour too. So has he contriv'd for our ease, that knowing how hardly we can divest our voluptuousness and ambition, he puts us not to it; all he demands is but that he may choose the objects, and in that is yet more obliging, for by that at once he refines and satisfies the desires. He takes us off indeed from the fulsom pleasures of sense, which by their grosness may cloy, yet by reason of their emptiness can never fill us; and brings us to taste the more pure spiritual delights which are the true elixir of Pleasures, in comparison whereof all the sensual are but as the dregs or feces in an extraction, after the spirits are drawn off. In like manner he calls us from our aspiring to those pinnacles of honour, where we always sit totteringly and often fall down, but yet invites us to soar higher, where we shall have the *moon* with all her vicissitudes and changes *under our feet*, *Rev.* 12. 1. and enjoy a grandeur as irreversible as splendid.

Consideration would also open a more inviting Scene of eternal rewards propos'd to Piety.

11. Thus do's he shew us a way to hallow our most unsanctified affections; thus, according to the Prophesie of *Zechariah*, *may holiness be writ even upon the bells of the horses*, *Zec.* 14. 20. upon our most brutal inclinations; and thus may all those feminine Passions which now seduce women from Vertue, advance them in it. Let her that is amorous, place her love upon him who is (as the Spouse tells us, *Cant.* 5. 10.) *the chiefest among ten thousand*; she that is angry, turn her edge against her sins; she that is haughty, disdain the Devils drudgery; she that is fearful, dread him who *can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell*, *Matth.* 5. 28. and she that is sad, reserve her tears for her penitential offices. Thus may they consecrate even their infirmities: and though they cannot Deifie, or erect Temples to them, as the Romans did to their Passions, nay their Diseases; yet after they are thus cleansed, they may sacrifice them as the Jews did the clean Beasts in the Tabernacle. Only Irreligion and Profaneness is exempt from this Priviledge, no water of Purification can cleanse it, or make it serviceable in the Temple; that, like the spoils of *Jericho*, is so execrable, that it must be devoted to destruction, as *an accursed thing*, *Josh.* 6. 17. For though God do not despise the work of his own hands, have so much kindness to his Creatures, that he endeavours to reduce all our native inclinations to their primitive rectitude, and therefore do's not abolish but purifie them; yet Atheism is none of those, 'tis a counterblast from hell, in opposition to that mighty wind in which the holy Spirit descended. Though the subject in which it subsists may be reform'd, the person may turn Christian, and the wit that maintain'd its blasphemous paradoxes may be converted to holier uses: yet the quality it self is capable of no such happy Meta-

Will teach to hallow the most unsanctified affections.

morphosis; that must be extirpated, for it cannot be made tributary. Which shews how transcendent an ill that is which cannot be converted to good, even that Omnipotence which can out of the very stones raise children to *Abraham*, attempts not any transmutation of this; which ought therefore to possess all hearts with a detestation of it, and to advance them in an earnest pursuit of all the parts of Piety.

There is no wisdom but in the fear of God.

12. And that is it which I would now once more (as a farewell exhortation) commend to my female Readers, as that which vertually contains all other accomplishments; 'tis that pearl in the Gospel for which they may part with all and make a good bargain too. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, says the wisest of Men, *Prov.* 1. 7. and by his experience he shews that it is the compleating end of it too; for he no sooner declin'd from that, but he grew to dotage and dishonour. Let all those therefore to whom God has dispenst an outward affluence, given them a visible splendour in the eyes of the World, be careful to secure to themselves *that honour which comes from God only*, *John* 5. 44. unite their souls to that supream Majesty who is the fountain of true honour: who in his bestowing the Crown of righteousness proceeds by the same measures by which he disposed the Crown of *Israel*, when he avow'd to *Samuel* that he *look'd not on the outward appearance but beheld the heart*, 1 *Sam*. 16. 7. If God see not his own Image there, all the beauty and gayety of the outward form is despicable in his eyes, like the apples of *Sodom* only a kind of painted dust. But if Piety be firmly rooted there, they then become like the Kings daughter all *glorious within* too; a much more valuable bravery than the *garment of needle-work, and vesture of Gold*, *Psalm* 45. 14. And this is it that must enter them into the Kings *Palace*, into that *new Jerusalem*, where they shall not wear, but inhabit *pearls* and Gems, *Rev*. 21. 19. be beautiful without the help of art or nature, by the meer reflexion of the Divine brightness; be all that their then enlarg'd comprehensions can wish, and infinitely more then they can here imagine.

FINIS.

THE

THE

GOVERNMENT

OF THE

TONGUE.

THE PREFACE.

THE Government of the Tongue has ever been justly reputed one of the most important parts of human Regiment. The Philosopher and the Divine equally attest this: and Solomon *(who was both) gives his suffrage also; the perswasions to, and encomiums of it, taking up a considerable part of his Book of Proverbs. I shall not therefore need to say any thing to justifie my choice of this Subject, which has so much better Authorities to commend it. I rather wish that it had not the superaddition of an accidental fitness grounded upon the universal neglect of it, it now seeming to be an art wholly out-dated. For though some lineaments of it may be met with in books, yet there is scarce any footsteps of it in practice, where alone it can be significant. The attempt therefore of reviving it I am sure is seasonable, I wish it were half as easy.*

2. *Indeed that skill was never very easy, it requiring the greatest vigilance and caution, and therefore not to be attain'd by loose trifling spirits. The Tongue is so slippery, that it easily deceives a drowsy or heedless guard. Nature seems to have given it some unhappy advantages towards that. 'Tis in its frame the most ready for motion of any member, needs not so much as the flexure of a joynt, and by access of humors acquires a glibness too, the more to facilitate its moving. And alas we too much find the effect of this its easy frame; it often goes without giving us warning; and as children when they happen upon a rolling engine, can set it in such a carriere, as wiser people cannot on a sudden stop; so the childish parts of us, our passions, our fancies, all our meer animal faculties, can thrust our tongues into such disorders, as our reason cannot easily rectify. The due managery therefore of this Unruly Member, may rightly be esteem'd one of the greatest mysteries of Wisdom and Vertue. This is intimated by* St. James, If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body, James 3. 2. *'Tis storied of* Bembo *a primitive Christian, that coming to a friend to teach him a Psalm, he began to him the thirty ninth,* I said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my Tongue; *upon hearing of which first verse, he stopt his Tutor, saying, This is enough for me, if I learn it as I ought; and being after six months rebuk'd for not coming again, he replied, that he had not yet learn'd his first lesson: nay after nineteen years he profest, that in that time he had scarce learn'd to fulfil that one line. I give not this instance to discourage, but rather to quicken men to the study; for a lesson that requires so much time to learn had need be early begun with.*

3. *But especially in this age, wherein the contrary liberty has got such a prepossession, that men look on it as a part of their birth-right; nay do not only let their tongues loose, but studiously suggest inordinacies to them, and use the spur where they should the bridle. By this means conversation is so generally corrupted, that many have had cause to wish they had not been made sociable creatures. A man secluded from company can have but the Devil and himself to tempt him; but he that converses, has almost as many snares as he has companions. Men barter vices, and as if each had not enough of his own growth, transplant out of his neighbours soil, and that which was intended to cultivate and civilize the world, has turned it into a wild desert and wilderness.*

4. *This face of things I confess looks not very promising to one who is to solicite a reformation. But whatever the hopes are, I am sure the needs are great enough to justify the attempt: for as the disease is Epidemick, so it is mortal also, utterly inconsistent with that pure religion, which leads to life. We may take St.* James*'s word for it,* If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that mans religion is vain, *James* 1. 26. *God knows we have not much Religion among us: 'tis great pity we should frustrate the little we have, render that utterly insignificant, which at the best amounts to so little. Let therefore the difficulty and necessity of the task, prevail with us to take time before us, not to defer this so necessary a work till the night come; or imagine that the Tongue will be able to expiate its whole age of guilt by a feeble* Lord have mercy on me *at the last. Though indeed if that were supposable, 'twere but a broken reed to trust to, none knowing whether he*

ſhall have time or grace for that. He may be ſurprized with an Oath, a Blaſphemy a Detraction in his mouth; many have been ſo. 'Tis ſure there muſt be a dying moment: And how can any man ſecure himſelf, it ſhall not be the ſame with that in which he utters thoſe, and his expiring breath be ſo employed? Sure they cannot think that thoſe incantations (though helliſh enough) can make them ſhot-free, render them invulnerable to deaths darts; and if they have not that or ſome other as ridiculous reſerves, 'tis ſtrange what ſhould make them run ſuch a mad adventure.

5. But I expect it ſhould be objected, that this little deſpicable Tract is not proportionable to the encounter to which it is brought; that beſides the unskilful managing of thoſe points it do's touch, it wholly omits many proper to the ſubject, there being faults of the Tongue which it paſſes in ſilence. I confeſs there is colour enough for this objection. But I believe if it were put to votes, more would reſolve I had ſaid too much, rather than too little. Should I have enlarged to the utmoſt compaſs of this Theme, I ſhould have made the Volume of ſo affrighting a bulk, that few would have attempted it; and by ſaying much I ſhould have ſaid nothing at all to thoſe who moſt need it. Mens ſtomacks are generally ſo queaſie in theſe caſes, that 'tis not ſafe to overload them; let them try how they can digeſt this: if they can ſo as to turn it into kindly nouriſhment, they will be able to ſupply themſelves with the remainder. For I think I may with ſome confidence affirm, that he that can confine his Tongue within the limits here preſcrib'd, may without much difficulty reſtrain its other excurſions. All I ſhall beg of the Reader, is but to come with ſincere intentions, and then perhaps theſe few Stones *and* Sling *uſed in the Name, and with invocation of the* Lord of Hoſts, *may countervail the maſſive armour, of the* uncircumciſed Philſtine; *And may that God who loves to magnifie his power in weakneſs, give it the like ſucceſs.*

THE CONTENTS.

THE

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

SECT. I.

Of the Use of Speech.

1. MAN at his first Creation was substituted by God as his Vicegerent, to receive the homage, and enjoy the services of all inferiour beings: nay farther was endowed with excellencies fit to maintain the port of so vast an Empire. Yet those very excellencies, as they qualified him for dominion, so they unfitted him for a satisfaction or acquiescence in those his vassals: the dignity of his nature set him above the society or converse of meer animals: so that in all the pomp of his royalty, amidst all the throng and variety of creatures, he still remain'd solitary. But God who knew what an appetite of society he had implanted in him, judged this no agreeable state for him, *It is not meet that man should be alone, Gen.* 2. 18. And as in the universal frame of nature, he ingraffed such an abhorrence of vacuity, that all creatures do rather submit to a preternatural motion than admit it; so, in this empty, this destitute condition of man, he relieved him by a miraculous expedient, divided him that he might unite him, and made one part of him an associate for the other.

Man in paradise could not be happy without conversation.

2. Neither did God take this care to provide him a companion, meerly for the entercourses of Sense; had that been the sole aim, there needed no new productions, there were sensitive creatures enough: the design was to entertain his nobler principle, his Reason, with a more equal converse, assign him an intimate, whose intellect as much corresponded with his, as did the outward form, whose heart, according to *Solomons* resemblance, answered his, *As in water face answers face, Prov.* 27. 19. with whom he might communicate minds, traffick and enterchange all the notions and sentiments of a reasonable soul.

Such a commerce as would entertain the rational faculties.

3. But though there were this smypathy in their sublimer part which disposed them to the most intimate union; yet there was a cloud of flesh in the way which intercepted their mutual view, nay permitted no intelligence between them, other than by the mediation of some Organ equally commensurate to soul and body. And to this purpose the infinite wisdom of God ordained Speech; which as it is a sound resulting from the modulation of the Air, as most affinity to the Spirit, but as it is uttered by the Tongue, has immediate cognation with the body, and so the fittest instrument to manage a commerce between the rational yet invisible powers of human souls clothed in flesh.

Make the mind visible to others.

4. And as we have reason to admire the excellency of this contrivance, so have we to applaud the extensiveness of the benefit. From this it is we derive all the advantages of society: without this men of the nearest neighbourhood would have signified no more to each other than our *Antipodes* now do to us. All our arts and sciences for the accommodation of this life, had remain'd only a rude Chaos in their first matter, had not speech by a mutual comparing of notions ranged them into order. By this it is we can give one another notice of our wants, and sollicit relief; by this we interchangably communicate advices, reproofs, consolations, all the necessary aids of human imbecility. This is that which possesses us of the most valuable

Hence we derive all the advantages of Society.

blessing of human life, I mean Friendship, which could no more have been contracted amongst dumb men, than it can between pictures and statues. Nay farther to this we owe in a great degree the interests even of our spiritual being, all the oral, yea and written revelations too of Gods will: for had there been no language, there had been no writing. And though we must not pronounce how far God might have evidenced himself to mankind by immediate inspiration of every individual, yet we may safely rest in the Apostles inference, *Rom.* 10. 14. *How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a Preacher?*

A farther excellence of Speech is its subservience to the praising God.

5. From all these excellent uses of it in respect of man, we may collect another in relation to God, that is, the *praising* and *magnifying* his goodness, as for all other effects of his bounty, so particularly that he hath given us language, and all the consequent advantages of it. This is the just inference of the Son of *Sirach*, *Eccluf.* 51. 22. *The Lord hath given me a tongue, and I will praise him therewith.* This is the sacrifice which God calls for so often by the Prophets, *the Calves of our lips*, which answers to all *the oblations out of the herd*, and which the Apostle makes equivalent to those of the *floor* and *wine-press* also. *Heb.* 13. 15. *The fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* To this we frequently find the Psalmist exciting both himself and others, *Awake up my glory, I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the people, And I will sing unto thee among the nations, Psal.* 57. 9. 10. And *O praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify his name together, Psal.* 34 3. And indeed whoever observes that excellent magazine of Devotion, the book of Psalms, shall find that the *Lauds* make up a very great part of it.

Which is the best touchstone by which to try our Speech.

6. By what hath been said, we may define what are the grand Uses of speech, *viz.* the glorifying of God, and the benefiting of men. And this helps us to an infallible test by which to try our words. For since every thing is so far approvable as it answers the end of its being, what part soever of our discourses agrees not with the primitive ends of speech, will not hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary. It will therefore nearly concern us to enter upon this scrutiny, to bring our words to this touchstone: for though in our depraved estimate the Eloquence of Language is more regarded than the Innocence, though we think our words vanish with the breath that utters them, yet they become records in Gods Court, are laid up in his Archieves as witnesses either for, or against us; for he who is truth it self hath told us, that *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd, Mat.* 12. 37.

Sect. II.

Of the manifold Abuse of Speech.

The abuses of Speech, are as great as its use.

1. AND now since the original designs of speaking are so noble, so advantageous, one would be apt to conclude no rational creature would be tempted to pervert them, since 'tis sure he can substitute none for them, that can equally conduce, either to his honour, or interest.

Original sin came first out of the mouth by speaking, before it entred in by eating.

2. Yet experience (that great baffler of speculation) assures us the thing is too possible, and brings in all ages matter of fact to confute our suppositions: so liable alas is speech to be depraved, that the Scripture describes it as the source of all our other depravation. Original sin came first out at the mouth by speaking, before it entred in by eating. The first use we find *Eve* to have made of her language, was to enter parly with the tempter, and from that to become a tempter to her husband. And immediately upon the fall, guilty *Adam* frames his tongue to a frivolous excuse, which was much less able to cover his sin than the fig-leaves were his nakedness. And as in the infancy of the first world, the tongue had licked up the venom of the old serpent, so neither could the Deluge wash it off in the second. No sooner was that small colony (wherewith the depopulated earth was to be replanted) come forth of the Ark, but we meet with *Cham* a delator to his own father, inviting his brethren to that execrable spectacle of their parents nakedness.

3. Nor

3. Nor did this only run in the blood of that accursed *Cham*; the holy seed was not totally free from its infection, even the Patriarchs themselves were not exempt. *Abraham* used a repeated collusion in the case of his wife, and exposed his own integrity to preserve her chastity. *Isaac* the heir of his blessing, was son of his infirmity also, acted over the same scene upon *Rebecca's* account. *Jacob* obtain'd his fathers blessing by a flat lie. *Simeon* and *Levi* spake not only falsly, but insidiously, nay hypocritically, abusing at once their proselytes and their religion, for the effecting their cruel designs upon the *Sichemites*. *Moses* though a man of an unparallel'd meekness, yet *spake unadvisedly with his lips*, *Psalm* 106. 33. *David* uttered a bloody vow against *Nabal*, spake *words smoother than oil* to *Uriah*, when he had done him one injury, and design'd him another. 'Twere endless to reckon up those several instances, the old Testament gives us of these lapses of the tongue: neither want there divers in the new; though there is one of so much horrour, as supersedes the naming more, I mean that of St. *Peter* in his reiterated abjuring his Lord, a crime which (abstracted from the intention) seems worse than that of *Judas*: that traitour own'd his relation, cried *Master Master* even when he betrayed him, so that had he been measured only by his tongue, he might have past for the better disciple.

The holy Patriarchs were not exempt from failing herein.

4. These are sad instances, not recorded to patronize the sin, but to excite our caution. It was a Politick inference of the Elders of Israel in the case of *Jehu*; *Behold two Kings stood not before him, how then shall we stand?* 2 *Kings* 10. 4. And we may well apply it to this; if persons of so circumspect a piety, have been thus overtaken, what security can there be for our wretchless oscitancy? If those who *kept* their *mouths as it were with a bridle*, *Psalm* 39. 2. could not always preserve them innocent, to what guilts may not our unrestrain'd licentious tongues hurry us? Those which as the Psalmist speaketh, *Psalm* 73. *go through the world*, are in that unbounded range very likely to meet with him who walks the same round, *Job* 2. and by him be tuned and set to his key, be scrued and wrested from their proper use, and made subservient to his vilest designs.

Which ought to be matter of caution against so prevailing a danger.

5. And would God this were only a probable supposition! but alas experience supplants the use of conjecture in the point: we do not only presume it may be so, but actually find it is so. For amidst the universal depravation of our faculties, there is none more notorious than that of speech. Whither shall we turn us to find it in its pristine integrity? amidst that infinity of words in which we exhaust our breath, how few are there which do at all correspond with the original designation of speech; nay which do not flatly contradict it? To what unholy, uncharitable purposes is that useful faculty perverted? That which was meant to serve as the perfume of the Tabernacle, to send up the incenses of praises and prayers, now exhales in impious vapours, to eclipse if it were possible the father of light. That which should be the store-house of relief and refreshment to our brethren, is become a magazine of all offensive weapons against them, *spears and arrows and sharp swords*, as the Psalmist often phrases them. We do not only fall by the slipperiness of our tongues, but we deliberately discipline and train them to mischief. *We bend our tongues as our bows for lies*, as the Prophet speaks, *Jer* 9. 3. And in a word, what God affirm'd of the old world in relation to thoughts, is too applicable to our words, they *are evil and that continually*, *Gen*. 6. 5. and that which was intended for the instrument, the aid of human society, is become the disturber, the pest of it.

The depravation of Speech appears in all parts of human life.

6. I shall not attempt a particular discussion of all the vices of the tongue: it doth indeed pass all Geography to draw an exact Map of that *world of iniquity*, as St. *James* calls it. I shall only draw the greater lines, and distribute it into its principal and more eminent parts, which are distinguishable as they relate to God, our Neighbour, and our Selves; in each of which I shall rather make an essay by way of instance, than attempt an exact enumeration or survey.

The running over all particulars being an endless task, 'twill be enough to point at the most remarkable.

SECT. III.

Of Atheistical Discourse.

The tongue though a despicable member, is so daring as to make war with heaven.

I BEGIN with those which relate to God, this poor despicable member the Tongue being of such a gigantick insolence though not size, as even to make war with heaven. 'Tis true every disorder'd speech doth remotely so, as it is a violation of Gods law; but I now speak only of those which as it were attack his person, and immediately fly in the face of Omnipotency. In the highest rank of these we may well place all Atheistical Discourse, which is that bold sort of rebellion, which strikes not only at his Authority, but himself. Other blasphemies level some at one Attribute, some another; but this by a more compendious impiety, shoots at his very being, and as if it scorn'd those piece-meal guilts, sets up a single monster big enough to devour them all: for all inferiour profaness is as much outdared by Atheism, as is religion it self.

An attempt scarce known in the heathen world.

2. Time was when the inveighing against this, would have been thought a very impertinent subject in a Christian nation, and men would have replied upon me as the *Spartan* Lady did, when she was ask'd what was the punishment for adulteresses, *There are no such things here.* Nay even amongst the most barbarous people, it could have concern'd but some few single persons; no numbers, much less societies of men, having ever excluded the belief of a Deity. And perhaps it may at this day concern them as little as ever; for amidst the various Deities and worships of those remoter nations, we have yet no account of any that renounc'd all. 'Tis only our light have so blinded us: so that God may upbraid us as he did Israel, *Hath a nation changed their gods which yet are no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit, Isa.* 2. 11. This madness is now the inclosure, the peculiarity of those, who by their names and institution should be Christians: as if that natural Aphorism, *That when things are at the height they must fall again* had place here also, and our being of the most excellent, most elevated religion, were but the preparative to our being of none.

With us 'tis grown reputable.

3. 'Tis indeed deplorable to see, how the professors of no God begin to vie numbers with all the differing perswasions in religion, so that Atheism seems to be the gulph that finally swallows up all our sects. It has struck on a sudden into such a reputation, that it scorns any longer to sculk, but own's it self more publickly than most men dare do the contrary. 'Tis set down in the seat of the scorner, and since it cannot argue, resolves to laugh all Piety out of countenance, and having seized the mint, nothing shall pass for wit that hath not its stamp, and with it there is no mettle of so base an alloy, but shall go current. Every the dullest creature that can but stoutly disclaim his maker, has by it sufficiently secur'd its title to ingenuity; and such measures being once establish'd, no wonder at its sholes of proselytes, when it gives on the one hand licence to all sensual inordinancies, permits them to be as much beasts as they will, or can, and yet tells them on the other, that they are the more men for it. Sure 'tis not strange that a hook thus doubly baited should catch many. Either of those allurements single, we see has force enough. The charms of sensuality are so fascinating, that even those who believe another world, and the severe revenges that will there attend their luxuries, yet chuse to take them in present with all there dismal reversions. And then sure it cannot but be very good news to such a one to be told, that that after-reckoning is but a false alarm, and his great willingness to have it true, will easily incline him to believe it is so. And doubtless were Atheism traced up to its first causes, this would be found the most operative; 'tis so convenient for a man that will have no God to controul or restrain him, to have none to punish him neither, that that utility passes into argument, and he will rather put a cheat upon his understanding by concluding, there is no future account, than such a sting in his pleasures, as the remembrance of it must needs prove. This seems to be the original and first rise of this impiety, it being impossible for any man that sees the whole, nay but the smallest part of the Universe, to doubt of a first and supream Being, until from the consciousness of his provocations, it become his interest there should be none.

4. This

4. This is indeed, considering the depravation of the world, a pretty fast tenure for Atheism to hold by; yet it has of late twisted its cord, and got that other string to its bow we before-mention'd. Its bold monopolizing of wit and reason compells, as the other invited men. This we may indeed call the Devils Press, by which he hath fill'd up his troops: men are afraid of being reproach'd for silly and irrational, in giving themselves up to a blind belief of what they do not see. And this bugbear frights them from their religion; resolving they will be *no fools for Christ's sake*, 1 *Cor.* 4. 13. I dare appeal to the breasts of many in this age, whether this hath not been one of the most prevalent temptations with them to espouse the tenet: and though perhaps they at first took it up, only in their own defence, for fear of being thought fools, yet that fear soon converts into ambition of being thought wits. They do not satisfy themselves with deserting their religion, unless they revile it also; remembring how themselves were laugh'd out of it, they essay to do the like by others. Yea so zealous propugners are they of their negative Creed, that they are importunately diligent to instruct men in it, and in all the little sophistries and colours for defending it: so that he that would measure the opinions by their industry, and the remisness of believers, would certainly think that the great interests of Eternity lay wholly on their side. Yet I take not this for any argument of the confidence of this perswasion, but the contrary: for we know they are not the secure, but the desperate undertakings, wherein men are most desirous of partners, and there is somewhat of horrour in an uncouth way, which makes men unwilling to travel it alone.

Upon the pretence to wit and reason.

5. The truth is, though these speak big, and prescribe as positively to their pupils, as if they had some counter revelation to confute those of *Moses* and *Christ*, yet were their secret thoughts laid open, there would scarce be found the like assurance there. I will not say to what reprobate sense some particular persons have provoked God to deliver them, but in the generality, I believe one may affirm, that there is seldom an infidelity so sanguine as to exclude all fears. Their most bold Thesis, That there is no God, no judgment, no hell, is often met with an inward tremulous Hypothesis, What if there be? I dare in this remit me to themselves, and challenge (not their consciences, who profess to have none, but) their natural ingenuity to say, whether they have not sometimes such damps and shiverings within them. If they shall say, that these are but the reliques of prepossession and education, which their reason soon dissipates; let me then ask them farther, whether they would not give a considerable sum to be infallibly ascertain'd there were no such thing: now no sensible man would give a farthing to be secur'd from a thing which his reason tells him is impossible; therefore if they would give any thing (as I dare say they cannot deny to themselves that they would) 'tis a true demonstration that they are not so sure as they pretend to be.

With which though the pretenders would bear down others, they cannot convince themselves.

6. I might here joyn issue upon the whole, and press them with the unreasonableness, the disingeniousness of embracing a Profession to which their own hearts have an inward reluctance, nay the imprudence of governing their lives by that position, which for ought they know may be (nay they actually fear is) false, and if it be, must inevitable immerse them in endless ruin. But I must remember my design limits me only to the faults of the Tongue, and therefore I must not follow this chase beyond those bounds. I shall only extend it to my proper subject, that of Atheistical talk, wherein they make as mad an adventure as in any other of their enormous practices, nay perhaps in some respects a worse.

A strange disingenuity and madness to embrace a profession their heart disown; and if false, will lead to inevitable ruin.

7. In the first place 'tis to be consider'd, that if there be a God, he, as well as men, may be provok'd by our words as well as deeds. Secondly 'tis possible he may be more. Our ill deeds may be done upon a vehement impulse of temptation; some profit or pleasures may transport and hurry us; and they may at least have this alleviation, that we did them to please or advantage our selves, not to spight God. But Atheistical words cannot be so palliated: they are arrows directly shot against heaven, and can come out of no quiver but malice; for 'tis certain there never was man that said, There was no God, but he wish'd it first. We know what enhancement our injuries to each other receive from their being malicious: and sure they will do so much more to God, whose principal demand from us is, that we give him our heart. But thirdly this implieth a malice of the highest sort. Human spight is usually confin'd within some bounds, aims sometimes at the goods, sometimes at the fame, at most but at the life of our neighbour: but here is an accumulation of all those, back'd with the most prodigious insolence. 'Tis God only that hath power of annihilation, and we (vile worms) seek here to steal that incommuni-

The provocation of words is as great, nay may be greater than that of deeds.

cable right, and retort it upon himself, and by an anticreative power would unmake him who has made us. Nay lastly, by this we have not only the utmost guilt of single rebels, but we become ringleaders also, draw in others to that accursed association: for 'tis only this liberty of discourse that hath propagated Atheism. The Devil might perhaps by inward suggestions have drawn in here and there a single Proselyte; but he could never have had such numbers, had he not used some as decoys to ensnare others.

It has no advantage to balance the danger.

8. And now let the brisk Atheist a little consider, what these aggravations will amount to. 'Twas good counsel was given to the *Athenians*, to be very sure *Philip* was dead, before they exprest joy at his death, lest they might find him alive to revenge that hasty triumph. And the like I may give to these men, Let them be very sure there is no God, before they presume thus to defie him, lest they find him at last assert his being in their destruction. Certainly nothing less than a demonstration can justify the reasonableness of such a daring. And when they can produce that, they have so far outgone all the comprehensions of mankind, they may well challenge the liberty of the Tongue, and say, *They are their own, who is Lord over them*, *Psalm* 12. 4.

The utmost gain, is vain applause.

9. But till this be done, 'twere well they would soberly balance the hazards of this liberty with the gains of it. The hazards are of the most dreadful kind, the gains of the slightest: the most is but a vain applause of wit for an impious jest; or of reason, for a deep considerer: and yet even for that they must incroach on the Devils right too, who is commonly the prompter, and therefore if there be any credit in it may justly challenge it. Indeed 'tis to be fear'd he will at last prove the master wit, when as for those little loans he makes them, he gets their souls in morgage. Would God they would consider betimes, what a woful railery that will be, which for ought they know may end in *gnashing of teeth*.

Swearing, is a remarkable part of Atheistical discourse.

10. The next impiety of the Tongue is Swearing, that foolish sin which plays the Platonick to damnation, and courts it purely for its self, without any of the appendant allurements which other sins have: a vice which for its guilt may justify the sharpest; and for its customariness, the frequentest invectives which can be made against it: but it has been assaulted so often by better pens, and has shewed it self so much proof against all Homily, that it is as needless as discouraging a task for me to attempt it. 'Tis indeed a thing taken up so perfectly without all sense, that 'tis the less wonder to find it maintain its self upon the same principle 'tis founded, and continue in the same defiance to reason wherein it began.

Which is strangely twisted with Atheism by which in reason it should be superseded.

11. All therefore that I shall say concerning it, is to express my wonder how it has made a shift to twist it self with the former sin of Atheism, by which according to all rules of reasoning it seems to be superseded: and yet we see none own God more in their oaths, than those that disavow him in their other discourse: nay such men swear not only to swell their language, and make it sound more full and blustring, but even when they most desire to be believ'd. What an absurdity of wickedness is this? Is there a God to swear by, and is there none to believe in, none to pray to? We call it frenzy to see a man fight with a shadow: but sure 'tis more so, to invoke it. Why then do these men of reason make such solemn appeals (for such every oath is) to a meer Chimera and Phantasm? It would make one think they had some inward belief of a Deity, which they upon surprizal thus blurt out: if it argue not this, it do's something worse, and becomes an evidence how much the appearance of a sin recommends it to them, that they thus catch at it, without examining how it will consist with another they like better. These are indeed whole-sale chapmen to Satan, that do not truck and barter one crime for another, but take the whole herd: and though by reason of their disagreeing kinds they are apt to gore and worry each other, yet he still keeps up his old policy, and will not let one Devil cast out another. A league shall be made between the most discordant sins, and there shall be a God, or there shall be none, according as opportunity serves to provoke him: so assuming to himself a power which even Omnipotence disclaims, the reconciling contradictions. And he succeeds in it as far as his concern reaches: for though he cannot solve the repugnancies in reason, yet as long as he can unite the sins in mens practice, he has his design; nay has at once the gain and the sport of fooling these great pretenders to ratiocination.

Another sort is profanation of Holy Scripture.

12. A third sort of impious discourse there is, which yet is bottom'd on the most sacred, I mean those profane paraphrases, that are usually made upon the holy Text, many making it the subject of their cavils, and others of their mirth. Some do it out of the former Atheistical principle, and I cannot but confess they act consonantly

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-nantly to themselves in it; for 'tis but a needful artifice for men to disparage those testimonies, which they fear may be brought against them. But there are others who not only profess a God, but also own the sacred Scripture for his word, and yet use it as coursly as the others. And these, I confess, are riddles of profaness, that hang, as some have pictured *Solomon*, between heaven and hell, borrow the Christians faith, and the Atheists drollery upon it: and 'tis hard to say in which they are more in earnest. It is indeed scandalous to see, to what despicable uses those holy Oracles are put: such as should a Heathen observe, he would little suspect them to be own'd by us as the rule of our religion, and could never think they were ever meant for any thing beyond a whetstone for wit. One tries his Logick upon them, and objects to the sense; another his Rhetorick, and quarrels at the phrase; a third his contrivance, and thinks he could have woven it with a better contexture: never considering, that unless they could confute the Divinity of their original, all these accusations are nothing else but direct blasphemy, the making God *such a one as themselves*, *Psalm* 50. 21. and charging him with those defects which are indeed their own. They want learning or industry to sound the depth of those sacred treasures, and therefore they decry the Scripture as mean and poor, and to justify their own wisdom, dispute Gods. This is as if the Mole should complain the sun is dark, because he dwells under ground, and sees not his splendour. Men are indeed in all instances apt to speak ill of the things they understand not, but in none more than this. Their ignorance of local customs, Idioms of language, and several other circumstances, renders them incompetent judges, (as hath been excellently evinc'd by a late Author.) 'Twill therefore befit them, either to qualify themselves better, or to spare their Criticisms. But upon the whole, I think I may challenge any ingenious man, to produce any writing of that antiquity, whose phrase and genius is so accommodated to all successions of ages. Stiles and ways of address we know grow obsolete, and are almost antiquated as garments: and yet after so long a tract of time, the Scripture must (by considering men) be confest to speak not only properly, but often politely and elegantly to the present age: a great argument that it is the dictate of him that is, *The same yesterday, to day and for ever*, *Heb.* 13. 7.

Of which not only the malicious detractors, but ludicrous jesters are guilty.

13. But besides these more solemn traducers, there are a lighter ludicrous sort of profaners, who use the Scripture as they do odd ends of plays, to furnish out their jests; cloath all their little impertinent conceits in its language, and debase it by the mixture of such miserable trifles, as themselves would be ashamed of, were they not heightned and inspirited by that profaness. A Bible phrase serves them in discourse, as the haut goust do's in diet, to give a relish to the most insipid stuff. And were it not for this magazine, a great many mens railery would want supplies: for there are divers who make a great noise of wit, that would be very mute if this one Topick were barr'd them. And indeed it seems a tacite confession, that they have little of their own, when they are fain thus to commit sacriledge to drive on the trade. But sure 'tis a pitiful pretence to ingenuity that can be thus kept up, there being little need of any other faculty but memory to be able to cap Texts. I am sure such repetitions out of other books would be thought pedantick and silly. How ridiculous would a man be, that should always enterlard his discourse with fragments of *Horace*, or *Virgil*, or the Aphorisms of *Pythagorus*, or *Seneca*? Now 'tis too evident, that it is not from any superlative esteem of sacred Writ, that it is so often quoted: and why should it then be thought a specimen of wit to do it there, when 'tis folly in other instances? The truth is, 'tis so much the reserve of those who can give no better testimony of their parts, that methinks upon that very score it should be given over by those that can. And sure were it possible for any thing that is so bad to grow unfashionable, the world has had enough of this to be cloyed with it: but how fond soever men are of this divertisement, 'twill finally prove that *mirth Solomon* speaks of, which *ends in heaviness*, *Prov.* 14. 13. for certainly whether we estimate it according to human or Divine measures, it must be a high provocation of God.

Such usage we should not bear, in any writings of our own.

14. Let any of us but put the case in our own persons: suppose we had written to a friend, to advertise him of things of the greatest importance to himself, had given him ample and exact instructions, back'd them with earnest exhortations and conjurings not to neglect his own concern, and lastly enforced all with the most moving expressions of kindness and tenderness to him: suppose, I say, that after all this, the next news we should hear of that letter, were to have it put in doggrel rime, to be made sport for the rabble, or at best have the most eminent phrases of

it pick'd out and made a common by-word: I would fain know how any of us would resent such a mixture of ingratitude and contumely. I think I need make no minute application. The whole design of the Bible do's sufficiently answer, nay outgo the first part of the parallel, and God knows our vile usage of it do's too much (I fear too literally) adapt the latter. And if we think the affront too base for one of us, can we believe God will take it in good part? That were to make him not only more stupid than any man, but as much so as the heathen Idols, that have *eyes and see not*, *Psalm* 115. 5. And 'tis sure the highest madness in the world, for any man that believes that there is a God, to imagine he will finally sit down by such usage.

The Heathen Oracles found a more civil treatment. So also the Mosaick Law.

15. But if we weigh it in the scale of religion, the crime will yet appear more heinous. Meer natural Piety has taught men to receive the Responses of their Gods with all possible veneration. What applications had the Delphick Oracle from all parts, and from all ranks of men? What confidence had they in its prediction, and what obedience did they pay to its advice? If we look next into the Mosaical Oeconomy, we shall see with what dreadful Solemnities that Law was promulged, what an awful reverence was paid to the mount whence it issued, how it was fenced from any rude intrusions either of men or beasts: and after it was written in tables, all the whole equipage of the Tabernacle, was design'd only for its more decent repository, the Ark it self receiving its value only from what it had in custody. Yea such a hallowing influence had it, as transfused a relative sanctity even to the meanest utensils, none of which were after to be put to common uses: the very perfume was so peculiar and sacred, that it was a capital crime to imitate the composition. Afterwards when more of the divine revelations was committed to writing, the Jews were such scrupulous reverers of it, that 'twas the business of ths Masorites, to number not only the sections and lines, but even the words and letters of the old Testament, that by that exact calculation they might better secure it from any surreptitious practices.

Yet a higher respect is due to the Gospel.

16. And sure the New Testament is not of less concern than the Old: nay the Apostle asserts it to be of far greater, and which we shall be more accountable for, *For if the word spoken by Angels were stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience receiv'd a just recompence, how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken to us by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? Heb.* 2. 23. And it is in another place the inference of the same Apostle, from the excellency of the Gospel above the Law, that we should *serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear, Heb.* 12. 28. And certainly 'tis but an ill essay of that reverence and godly fear, to use that very Gospel so irreverently and ungodlily as men now do. If we pass from the Apostle to the next succeeding ages of the Church, we find the Primitive Christians look'd on their Bibles as their most important treasure. Such was the outward respect they paid to them (of which the standing up at the reading of the Gospel, still in use among us, is a faint memorial) that the heathen persecutors made it one part of their examination of the Christians brought to their tribunals, *What those books were which they adored while they read them?* Such was their intimate esteem, that they exposed all things else to the rapine of their enemies, so they might secure those volumes. Nor was this only an heroick piece of zeal in some, but indispensably required of all: insomuch that when in the heat of persecution, they were commanded to deliver up their Bibles to be burnt, the Church gave no indulgence for that necessity of the times, but exhorted men rather to deliver up their lives: and those whose courage fail'd them in the enconter, were not only branded by the infamous name of *Traditors*, but separated from the communion of the faithful, and not readmitted till after many years of the severest penance.

This age is singular in its profanation.

17. I have given this brief narration, with a desire that the Reader will compare the practice of former times with those of the present, and see what he can find either among Heathens, Jews or Christians, that can at all patronize our profaness. There was no respect thought too much for the false Oracles of a falser God: and yet we think no contempts too great for those of the true. The moral Law was so sacred to the Jews, that no parts of its remotest retinue, those ceremonial attendants, were to be look'd on as common: and we who are equally obliged by that Law, laugh at that by which we must one day be judged. The Ritual, the Preceptive, the Prophetick, and all other parts of sacred Writ, were most sedulously, most religiously guarded by them: and we look upon them as a winter nights tale, from which to fetch matter of sport and merriment. Lastly the first Christians paid a veneration to, nay sacrificed their lives to rescue their Bibles from the unworthy

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usage of the Heathens, and we our selves expose them to worse: they would but have burnt them, we scorn and vilify them, and outvy even the persecutors malice with our contempt. These are miserable Antithesises; yet this God knows is the case with too many. I wonder what new state of Felicity hereafter these men have fancied to themselves: for sure they cannot think these retrograde steps, can ever bring them so much as to the Heathens Elysium, much less the Christians Heaven.

18. It will therefore concern those who do not quite renounce their claim to that Heaven, to consider soberly, how inconsistent their practice is with those hopes. A man may have a great estate conveyed to him; but if he will madly burn, or childishly make Paper-kites of his Deeds, he forfeits his title with his evidence: and those certainly that deal so with the Conveiances of their eternal inheritance, will not speed better. If they will thus dally and play with them, God will be as little in earnest in the performance, as they are in the reception of the promises; nay he will take his turn of mocking too, and when their scene of mirth is over, his will begin. A dreadful menace of this we have *Prov.* 1. 24, 25, *&c.* which deserves to be set down at large, *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind: when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.* Would God I could as well transcribe this Text into mens hearts, and there would need no more to secure the whole Canon of Scripture from their Profanation! Could men but look a little before them, and apprehend how in the days of their distress and agony, they will gasp for those comforts which they now turn into ridicule; they would not thus madly defeat themselves, cut off their best and only reserve, and with a pitiful contempt, cast away those Cordials, which will then be the only support of their fainting spirits. As for those who deride Scripture upon Atheistical grounds, all I shall say is to refer to what I have said in the beginning of this Section; they had need be very well assured that foundation be not sandy: for if it be, this reproaching Gods word will be a considerable addition to the guilt of all their other hostility, and how jolly soever they seem at present, it may be when that question they are so willing to take for granted, is by death drawing near a decision, some of their confidence will retire, and leave them in an amazed expectation of somewhat, which they are sure cannot be good for them, who have so ill provided for it. Then perhaps their merry vein will fail them; and not their infidelity, but their despair may keep them from invocating that Power they have so long derided. 'Tis certain it has so happened with some: for as Practical, so Speculative wickedness, has usually another aspect, when it stands in the shadow of death, than in the dazling beams of health and vigour. It would therefore be wisdom before hand to draw it out of this deceitful light, and by sober serious thoughts place it as near as may be in those circumstances in which 'twill then appear: and then sure to hearts that are not wholly petrified, 'twill appear safer to own a God early and upon choice, than late upon compulsion.

We do not use to burn, or trifle with the deeds and conveiances of our estates

19. However if they will not yield themselves Homagers, yet the meer possibility of their being in the wrong, should methinks perswade them at least to be civil adversaries. A generous man will not pursue even a falling enemy with revilings and reproach, much less will a wise man do it to one who is in any the least probability of revenging it: it being a receiv'd Maxim, That there is no greater folly than for a man to let his tongue betray him to mischief. Let it therefore in this case at least stand neuter, that if by their words they be not justified, yet by their words they may not be condemned. They can be no losers by it: for at the utmost, 'tis but keeping in a little unsavoury breath, which (supposing no Gods to be offended with it) is yet nauseous to all those men who believe there is one. To those indeed who have a zeal for their faith, there can be no discourse so intolerable, so disobliging: it turns conversation into skirmishing, and perpetual disputes. The Egyptians were so zealous for their brutish Deities, that *Moses* presumed the Israelites sacrificing of those beasts they adored, Must needs set them in an uproar, *Exod.* 8. 26. And sure those who do acknowledge a Divine power, cannot contentedly sit by to hear him blasphemed. 'Tis true there are some so cool, that they are of the same mind for God, that *Gideons* father was for *Baal, Judges* 6. 31. *Let him plead for himself*, they will not appear in his defence: yet even these have a secret consciousness, that they ought to do so, and therefore have some uneasiness in being put to the Test: so that it cannot be a pleasant entertainment even for them. And there-

If duty will not restrain from atheistical discourse, civility should.

therefore those who have no fear of God to restrain them, should methinks, unless they be perfectly of the temper of the unjust Judge, *Luke* 17. 1. in respect to men, abstain from all sorts of impious discourse; and at least be civil, though they will not be pious.

SECT. IV.

Of Detraction.

Detraction seems to have prevail'd among men, in that they are not generally convinc'd of its guilt.

1. WE have seen in the last Section the insolence of the Tongue towards God; and sure we cannot expect it should pay more reverence to men. If there be those that dare *stretch their mouths against heaven*, *Psalm* 73. 9. we are not to wonder if there be more that will *shoot their arrows even bitter words*, against the best on earth, *Psalm* 64. 3. I shall not attempt to ransack the whole quiver, by shewing every particular sort of verbal injuries which relate to our Neighbours, but rather chuse out some few, which either for the extraordinariness of their guilt, or the frequency of their practice, are the most eminent. I begin with *Detraction*, in which both those qualities concur: for as in some instances 'tis one of the highest sins, so in the general 'tis certainly one of the most common, and by being so becomes insensible. This vice (above all others) seems to have maintain'd not only its Empire, but its reputation too. Men are not yet convinced heartily that it is a sin: or if any, not of so deep a die, or so wide an extent as indeed it is. They have if not false, yet imperfect notions of it, and by not knowing how far its Circle reaches, do often like young Conjurers step beyond the limits of their safety.

And therefore remains with otherwise vertuous men.

2. This I am the apter to believe, because I see some degree of this fault cleave to those, who have eminently corrected all other exorbitancies of the Tongue. Many who would startle at an Oath, whose stomachs as well as consciences recoil at an obscenity, do yet slide glibly into a Detraction: which yet methinks persons otherwise of strict conversations should not do frequently and habitually, had not their easy thoughts of the guilt smoothed the way to it.

If it were light in it self, custom might give great aggravations.

3. It may therefore be no unkind attempt, to try to disentangle from this snare by displaying it; shewing the whole contexture of the sin, how 'tis woven with threads of different sizes, yet the least of them strong enough to nooze and intrap us. And alas, if Satan fetter us, 'tis indifferent to him whether it be by a cable or a hair: nay perhaps the smallest sins are his greatest stratagems. The finer his line is spun, the less shadow it casts, and is less apt to fright us from the hook: and though there be much odds between a talent of lead and a grain of sand, yet those grains may be accumulated, 'till they out-weigh the talent. It was a good reply of *Plato*'s, to one who murmured at his reproving him for a small matter, *Custom*, says he, *is no small matter*. And indeed supposing any sin were so small as we are willing to fancy most, yet an indulgent habit even of that would be certainly ruinous: that indulgence being perfectly opposite to the Love of God, which better can consist with the indeliberate commissions of many sins, than with an allowed persistance in any one.

The sin considered absolutely is great.

4. But in this matter of Detraction I cannot yield that any is small, save only comparatively with some other of the same kind which is greater: for absolutely considered, there is even in the very lowest degrees of it, a flat contradiction to the grand rule of Charity, the loving our neighbour as our selves. And surely that which at once violates the sum of the whole second Table of the Law, for so our Saviour renders it, *Luke* 10. 7. must be look'd on as no trifling inconsiderable guilt. To evidence this I shall in the Anatomizing this sin, apply this Rule to every part of it. I shall first consider it in Gross, in its entire body, and after descend to its several limbs.

Detraction imports the lessening of a man in his fame.

5. Detraction in the native importance of the word, signifies the withdrawing or taking off from a thing; and as it is applied to the reputation, it denotes the impairing and lessening a man in point of fame, rendring him less valued and esteem'd by others, which is the final aim of Detraction, though pursued by various means.

6. This

6. This is justly look'd on as one of the most unkind designs one man can have upon another, there being implanted in every mans nature a great tenderness of Reputation: and to be careless of it, is look'd on as a mark of a Degenerous mind. On which account *Solon* in his Laws presumes, that he that will sell his own fame, will also sell the publick interest. 'Tis true, many have improv'd this too far, blown up this native spark into such flames of Ambition, as has set the world in a combustion; Such as *Alexander*, *Cesar*, and others, who sacrified Hecatombs to their Fame, fed it up to a prodigy upon a Cannibal diet the flesh of Men: yet even these excesses serve to evince the universal consent of mankind, that Reputation is a valuable and desirable thing.

Which men generally value as their civil life.

7. Nor have we only the suffrage of man, but the attestation of God himself, who frequently in Scripture gives testimony to it: *A good name is better than great riches*, *Prov.* 22. 1. And again, *A good name is better then precious ointment*, *Eccles.* 7. 1. And the more to recommend it, he proposes it as a reward to Piety and Vertue, as he menaces the contrary to wickedness. *The memory of the just shall be blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.* And that we may not think this an invitation fitted only to the Jewish Oeconomy, the Apostle goes farther, and proposes the endeavour after it as a duty, *Whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any vertue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*, *Phil.* 4. 8.

To which the Scriptures add their suffrage.

8. And accordingly good men have in their estimate ranked their names the next degree to their Souls, preferr'd them before goods or life. Indeed 'tis that which gives an inferiour sort of Immortality, and makes us even in this world survive our selves. This part of us alone continues verdant in the grave, and yields a perfume, when we are stench and rottenness: the consideration whereof has so prevail'd with the more generous Heathens, that they have cheerfully quitted life in contemplation of it. Thus *Epaminondas* alacriously expired, in confidence that he left behind him a perpetual memory of the victories he had atchiev'd for his Country. *Brutus* so courted the fame of a Patriot, that he brake through all the obstacles of gratitude and humanity to attain it: he cheerfully bare the defeat of his attempt, in contemplation of the glory of it. 'Twere endless to recount the stories of the *Codri*, *Decii*, and *Curtii*, with the train of those noble Hero's, who in behalf of their Countries devoted themselves to certain death.

All good men have preferr'd their reputation before their goods or life.

9. But we need no forreign Mediums to discover the value of a good name: let every man weigh it but in his own scales, return to his breast, and there reflect on that impatience he has when his own repute is invaded. To what dangers, to what guilts do's sometimes the meer fancy of a reproach hurry men? It makes them really forfeit that vertue from whence all true reputation springs, and like *Esops* dog, lose the substance by too greedy catching at the shadow; an irrefragable proof how great a price they set upon their fame.

Our own resentments of ill dealing in this kind, will convince us of the greatness of the injury.

10. And then since reason sets it at so high a rate, and passion at a higher, we may conclude the violating this interest, one of the greatest injuries in human commerce; such as is resented not only by the rash, but the sober: so that we must pick out only blocks and stones, the stupid and insensible part of mankind, if we think we can inflict this wound without an afflictive smart. And though the power of Christianity do's in some so moderate this resentment, that none of those blows shall recoil, no degree of revenge be attempted; yet that do's not at all justify or excuse the inflicter. It may indeed be a useful trial of the patience and meekness of the defam'd, yet the defamer has not the less either of crime or danger: not of crime, for that is rather enhanc'd than abated by the goodness of the person injur'd; nor of danger, since God is the more immediate avenger of those who attempt not to be their own. But if the injury meet not with this meekness (as in this vindictive age 'tis manifold odds it will not) it then acquires another accumulative guilt, stands answerable not only for its own positive ill, but for all the accidental which it causes in the sufferer, who by this means is robb'd not only of his repute, but his innocence also, provoked to those unchristian returns, which draw God also into the enmity, and set him at once at war with heaven and earth. And though as to his immediate judgment, he must bear his iniquity, answer for his impatience: yet as in all civil insurrections the ringleader is look'd on with a particular severity, so doubtless in this case, the first provoker has by his seniority and primogeniture a double portion of the guilt, and may consequently expect of the Punishment, according to the Doom of our Saviour, *Wo be to that man by whom the offence cometh*, *Mat.* 18. 7.

The mischiefs are infinite that follow Detraction.

11. Indeed there is such a train of mischiefs usually follow this sin, that 'tis scarce possible to make a full estimate of its malignity. 'Tis one of the grand incendiaries which disturbs the peace of the world, and has a great share in most of its quarrels. For could we examine all the feuds which harrass Persons, Families, nay sometimes Nations too, we should find the greater part, take their rise from injurious reproachful words, and that for one which is commenc'd upon the intuition of any real considerable interest, there are many which owe their being to this licentiousness of the Tongue.

The guilt is also easily incurr'd.

12. In regard therefore of its proper guilt, and all those remoter sins and miseries which ensue it, 'tis every mans great concern to watch over himself. Neither is it less in respect both of that universal aptness we have to this sin, and its being so perpetually at hand, that for others we must attend occasions and convenient seasons, but the opportunities of this are always ready: I can do my neighbour this injury, when I can do him no other. Besides the multitude of objects do proportionably multiply both the possibilities and incitations; and the objects here are as numerous, as there are Persons in the world, I either know, or have heard of. For though some sorts of Detractions seem confin'd to those to whom we bear particular malice, yet there are other kinds of it more ranging, which fly indifferently at all. Lastly this sin has the aid almost of universal example, which is an advantage beyond all the other, there being scarce any so irresistable insinuation as the practice of those with whom we converse, and no subject of converse so common as the defaming our neighbours.

Therefore needs to be particularly decipher'd.

13. Since then the path is so slippery, it had not need be dark too. Let us then take in the best light we can, and attentively view this sin in its several branches, that by a distinct discovery of the divers acts and degrees of it, we may the better be arm'd against them all.

SECT. V.

Of Lying Defamation.

Defamatory reports are either true or false.

1. DETRACTION being (as we have already said) the lessening and impairing a man in his repute, we may resolve, that whatever conduces to that end, is properly a Detraction. I shall begin with that which is most eminent, the spreading of Defamatory reports. These may be of two kinds, either false, or true: which though they seem to be of very different complexions, yet may spring from the same stock, and drive at the same design. Let us first consider of the false.

The highest degree is the inventing a perfect falsity.

2. And this admits of various circumstances. Sometimes a man invents a perfect falsity of another; sometime he that do's not invent it, yet reports it, though he know it to be false; and a third sort there are, who having not certain knowledge whether it be false or no, do yet divulge it as an absolute certainty, or at least with such artificial insinuations, as may biass the hearer on that hand. The former of these is a crime of so high, so disingenious a nature, that though many are vile enough to commit it, none are so impudent as to avow it. Even in this age of insulting vice, when almost all other wickedness appears bare-fac'd, this is fain to keep on the vizard. No man will own himself a false accuser: for if modesty do not restrain him, yet his very malice will; since to confess would be to defeat his design. Indeed it is of all other sins the most Diabolical, it being a conjunction of two of Satans most essential properties, Malice and Lying. We know 'tis his peculiar title to be *the Accuser of the brethren*: and when we transcribe his copy, we also assume his nature, intitle our selves to a descent from him, *Ye are of your Father the Devil, John* 8. 44. We are by it rendred a sort of *Incubus* brats, the infamous progenies of the lying Spirit. It is indeed a sin of so gross, so formidable a bulk, that there needs no help of Opticks to render it discernable, and therefore I need not further expatiate on it.

The

3. The next degree is not much short of it; what it wants is rather of invention than malice: for he that will so adopt anothers lie, shews he would willingly have been its proper Father. It do's indeed differ no more than the maker of adulterate wares, do's from the vender of them: and certainly there cannot be a more ignominious trade, than the being Hucksters to such vile Merchandize. Neither is the sin less than the baseness: we find the *Lover* of a lie ranked in an equal form of guilt with the *Maker*, *Rev.* 21. 27. And surely he must be presum'd to love it, that can descend to be the broker to it, help it to pass currant in the world.

A second degree is the wilful propagating anothers lie.

4. The third sort of Detractors look a little more demurely, and with the woman in the *Proverbs*, Chapter 30. v. 20. *wipe their mouths, and say they have done no wickedness.* They do not certainly know the falsity of what they report, and their ignorance must serve them as an Amulet against the guilt both of deceit and malice: but I fear it will do neither. For first perhaps they are affectedly ignorant: they are so willing it should be true, that they have not attempted to examine it. But Secondly it do's not suffice that I do not know the falsity: for to make me a true speaker, 'tis necessary I know the truth of what I affirm. Nay if the thing were never so true, yet if I knew it not to be so, its truth will not secure me from being a liar: and therefore whoever endeavours to have that receiv'd for a certainty, which himself knows not to be so, offends against truth. The utmost that can consist with sincerity, is to represent it to others as doubtful as it appears to him: yet even that how consonant soever to truth, is not to Charity. Even doubtful accusations leave a stain behind them, and often prove indelible injuries to the party accused: how much more then do the more positive and confident aspersions we have hitherto spoken of? Let me add only this concerning this latter sort, that they are greater advancers of Defamatory designs, than the very first contrivers. For those upon a consciousness of their falsness are obliged to proceed cautiously, to pick out the credulous and least discerning persons, on whom to impose their fictions, and dare not produce them in all companies for fear of detection: but these in confidence that the untruth (if it be one) lies not at their door, speak it without any restraint in all places, at all times, and what the others are fain to whisper, they proclaim, like our new Engine, which pretends to convey a whisper many miles off. So that as in the case of Stealing, 'tis proverbially said, that if there were no receivers, there would be no thieves; so in this of Slander, if there were fewer spreaders, there would be fewer forgers of Libels: the manufacture would be discourag'd, if it had not these retailers to put off the wares.

A third degree is the reporting that, whose truth the reporter is not assur'd of.

5. Now to apply these practices to our rule of duty, there will need no very close inspection to discern the obliquity. The most superficial glance will evidence these several degrees of Slanderers, to do what they would not be willing to suffer. Who among them can be content to be falsly aspersed? Nay so far are they from that, that let but the shadow of their own calumny reflect on themselves, let any but truly tell them that they have falsly accused others, they grow raving and impatient, like a dog at a looking-glass fiercely combating that image which himself creates: and how smoothly soever the original lie slides from them, the Eccho of it grates their ears. And indeed 'tis observable, that those which make the greatest havock of other mens reputation, are the most nicely tender of their own; which sets this sin of calumny in a most Diametrical opposition to the Evangelical precept of *Loving our neighbours as our selves.*

All these practices fall under the rule of doing as we would be done by.

6. Thus much is discernable even in the surface of the crime: but if we look deeper and examine the motives, we shall find the foundation well agrees to the superstructure, they being usually one of these two, *Malice* or *Interest*. And indeed the thing is so disingenious, so contrary to the dictates of Humanity as well as Divinity, that I must in reverence to our common nature, presume it must be some very forcible impellent, that must drive a man so far from himself. The Devil here plays the Artist: and as the fatallest poisons to man are (they say) drawn from human bodies, so here he extracts the venom of our Irascible and Concupiscible part, and in it dips those arrows, which we thus shoot at one another.

Defamation is generally founded either on malice or interest.

7. 'Tis needless to harangue severally upon each. The world too experimentally knows the force of both. *Malice* is that whirlwind, which has shook States and Families, no less than private Persons; a passion so impetuous and percipitate, that it often equally involves the Agent and the Patient: a malicious man being of like violence with those who flung in the three Children, *Daniel* 3. consumed by those flames into which he cast others. As for *Interest*, 'tis that universal Monarch to which all other Empires are Tributaries, to which men sacrifice not only their

Passions exceedingly impetuous and precipitate.

Consciences and Innocence, but (what is usually much dearer) their Sensualities and Vices. Those whom all the Divine (either) threats or promises, cannot perswade to mortify, nay but restrain one Lust, at *Mammons* beck will disclaim many, and force their inclinations to comply with their interest.

'Tis also practiced as wit and divertisement.

8. And whilst this sin of Calumny has two such potent Abettors, we are not to wonder at its growth: as long as men are malicious and designing, they will be traducing; those Cyclops's will be perpetually forging Thunderbolts, against which no innocence or vertue can be proof. And alas we daily find too great effect of their industry. But though these are forgers of the more solemn deliberate calumnies, yet this sportive age hath produc'd another sort, there being men that defame others by way of divertisement, invent little stories that they may find themselves exercise, and the Town talk. This if it must pass for sport, is such as *Solomon* describes, *Prov.* 26. 18, 19. *As a mad man that casteth fire-brands, arrows and death, so is he that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, am not I in sport?* He that shoots an arrow in jest, may kill a man in earnest, and he that gives himself liberty to play with his neighbours fame, may soon play it away. Most men have such an aptness to entertain sinister opinions of others, that they greedily draw in any suggestion of that kind; and one may as easily perswade the thirsty earth to refund the water she has suck'd into her veins, as them to deposite a prejudice they have once taken up. Therefore such experiments upon fame, are as dangerous as that which *Alexander* is said to have made of the force of *Naptha* upon his Page, from which he scarce escaped with life. These jocular slanders are often as mischievous as those of deeper design, and have from the slightness of the temptation an enhancement of guilt. For sure he that can put such an interest of his neighbours in balance with a little fit of laughter, sets it at a lower price than he that hopes to enrich or advance himself by it: and though it pass among some for a specimen of wit, yet it really leaves them among *Solomons* fools who *make a mock at sin*, *Prov.* 14. 9. In the mean time since slander is a plant that can grow in all soils, since the frolick humor as well as the morose betrays to the guilt, who can hope to escape this *Scourge of the Tongue*, as the Wise man calls it, which communicates with all. Persons of all ranks do mutually asperse, and are aspersed: so that he who would not have his credulity abused, has scarce a securer way, than (like that Astrologer, who made his Almanack give a tolerable account of the weather by a direct inversion of the common prognosticators,) to let his belief run quite counter to reports. Yea so Epidemick is this disease grown, that even religion (at least those parties and factions which assume that name) has got a taint of it; each sect or opinion seeking to represent its Antagonist as odious as it can: and whilst they contend for speculative truth, they by mutual calumnies forfeit the practick: a thing that justly excites the grief of good men, to see that those who all pretend to the same Christianity, should only be unanimous in the violating that truth and Charity it prescribes.

'Tis used as a weapon against adversaries of all kinds.

9. And if these be the weapons of our spiritual warfare, what may we think of the carnal? How are our secular animosities pursu'd, when our Speculations are thus managed? How easily do we run down the reputation of any who stand in the way, either of our spleen or avarice? When *Joseph's* resolute purity had changed the scene of his Mistress's passion, she dos as readily shift that of guilt too, and fixes her crime upon him, *Gen.* 39. So when *Ziba* had a mind to undermine *Mephibosheth* in his estate, he first practices upon his fame in a false accusation, 2 *Sam.* 16. 3. And alas how familiarly do men now see both these scenes reacted? Those who will not take vice into their bosoms, shall yet have it bespatter their faces: they who will not run *to the same excess of riot*, must expect to be evil spoken of, 1 *Peter* 4. 4. Nay not only pious men, but piety it self partakes of the same fate, falls under the two-edg'd slander both of deceit and folly. And if men cannot be permitted quietly to enjoy their piety, much less will they those things whereof the world has more gust, I mean secular advantages. There are still crimes to be discover'd in the possessors of honours or Estates, and they wonderfully excite the zeal of those who would supplant them. What artifices are there to make them appear unworthy of what they have, that others more unworthy may succeed them? Nor are these storms only in the upper region, in the higher ranks of men; but if we pass through all degrees, we shall find the difference is rather in the value of the things, than in the means of pursuing them. He that pretends to the meanest office, do's as studiously disparage his competitor, as he that is rival'd for a kingdom. Nay even he that has but a merry humor to gratify, makes no scruple to do it with the loss of another mans reputation.

10. Thus

10. Thus do we accommodate every petty temporal interest at the cost of our eternal: and as an unskilful Fencer, whilst he is pursuing his thrust, exposes his body; so whilst we thus actuate our own malice, we abandon our selves to Satans, receive mortal wounds from him, only that we may give a few light scratches to one another. For as I have before said, there is nothing do's more secure his title to us, than this vice of Calumny, it bearing his proper impress and figure. And we may fear *Christ* will one day make the same Judgment of Persons as he did of coin, and award them to him *whose Image and Superscription* they bear, *Matth.* 22. 20.

We accommodate every little temporal interest at the cost of our eternal.

11. And now how great a madness is it, to make such costly oblations to so vile an Idol? This is indeed the worshiping our own Imaginations, preferring a malicious fiction before a real felicity, and is but faintly resembled by him, who is said to have chosen to part with his Bishoprick, rather than burn his Romance. Alas are there not gross corporal sins enough to ruin us, but must we have aereal ones too, damn our selves with Chimera's, and by these forgeries of our brains dream our selves to destruction.

A great madness to add to our gross corporal sins, the guilt of forgeries and Chimera's

12. Let all those then who thus unhappily imploy their inventive faculty, timely consider, how unthriving a trade 'tis finally like to prove, that all their false accusations of others, will rebound in true ones upon themselves. It do's often so in this world, where many times the most Clandestine contrivances of this kind meet with detection: or if they should happen to keep on the disguise here, yet 'twill infallibly be torn off at the great day of manifestation, when before God, Angels, and Men, they will be render'd infinitely more vile, then 'twas possible for them here to make others.

Our false accusations of others, will be true ones upon our selves.

SECT. VI.

Of Uncharitable Truth.

1. IN the next place we are to consider of the other branch of Defamatory reports, *viz.* such as are true: which though they must be confest to be of a lower form of guilt than the former, yet as to the kind, they equally agree in the definition of Detraction, since 'tis possible to impair a mans credit by true reports as well as by false.

The relating of what is true may be Defamation.

2. To clear this I shall first observe, that although every fault hath some penal effects which are coetaneous to the act, yet this of Infamy is not so: this is a more remote consequent; that which it immediately depends upon, is the publishing. A man may do things which to God and his own conscience render him abominable, and yet keep his reputation with men: but when this stifled crime breaks out, when his secret guilts are detected, then, and not till then, he becomes infamous: so that although his sin be the Material, yet it is the discovery that is the Formal cause of his infamy.

Tho' guilt be the material, discovery is the formal cause of infamy.

3. This being granted, it follows that he that divulges an unknown concealed fault, stands accountable for all the the consequences that flow from that divulging; but whether accountable as for guilt, must be determin'd by the particular circumstances of the cause. So that here we must admit of an exception: for though every discovery of anothers fault be in the strict natural sense of the word a Detraction, yet it will not always be the sin of Detraction, because in some instances there may some higher obligation intervene, and supersede that we owe to the fame of our neighbour; and in those cases it may not only be lawful, but necessary to expose him.

The divulging of concealed faults is not always unlawful.

4. Now all such cases I conceive may summarily be reduced to two heads, Justice and Charity. First as to Justice: that we know is a fundamental vertue, and he that shall violate that, to abound in another, is as absurd, as he that undermines the foundation to raise the walls. We are not to steal to give alms, and God himself has declar'd that he hates robbery for a burnt-offering: so that no pretence either of Charity or Piety can absolve us from the duty we owe to Justice. Now it may often fall out, that by concealing one mans fault, I may be injurious to another, nay to a whole community: and then I assume the guilt I conceal, and by the Laws both of God and Man, am judged an accessory.

Particularly when the discovery is upon obligation of Justice or Charity.

Justice not only to others but also to ones self.

5. And as Justice to others enforces, so sometimes Justice to a mans self allows the publishing of a fault, when a considerable interest either of fame or fortune cannot otherwise be rescued. But to make loud outcries of injury, when they tend nothing to the redress of it, is a liberty rather assumed by rage and impatience, than authoriz'd by Justice. Nay often in that case the complainer is the most injurious Person; for he inflicts more than he suffers, and in lieu of some trivial right of his which is invaded, he assaults the other in a nearer interest, by wounding him in his good name: but if the cause be considerable, and the manner regular, there lies sure no obligations upon any man, to wrong himself, to indulge to another.

Charity though it covers, yet it sometimes betrays offences.

6. Neither do's Charity retrench this liberty: for though it be one act of Charity to conceal another mans faults, yet sometimes it may be inconsistent with some more important Charity, which I owe to a third Person, or perhaps to a multitude; as in those cases wherein publick benefit is concern'd. If this were not allowable, no history could lawfully be written, since if true, it cannot but recount the faults of many: no evidence could be brought in against a Malefactor: and indeed all discipline would be subverted, which would be so great a mischief, that Charity obliges to prevent it, what Defamation soever fall upon the guilty by it. For in such instances 'tis a true rule, that mercy to the evil proves cruelty to the innocent: and as in a competition of mischiefs, we are to chuse the least, so of two goods the greatest, and the more extensive, is the most eligible.

Charity not only to a neighbour, but also to ones self.

7. Nay even that Charity which reflects upon my self, may also sometimes supersede that to my Neighbour, the rule obliging me to love him as, not better than, my self. I indeed not sure silently assent to my own unjust Defamation, for fear of proving another a false accuser, nor suffer my self to be made a beggar, to conceal another mans being a thief. 'Tis true, in a great inequality of interests, Charity (whose Character it is, *Not to seek her own*, 1 *Cor.* 13. 5.) will prompt me to prefer a greater concern of my neighbours, before a slight one of my own: but in equal circumstances I am sure at liberty to be kind first to my self. If I will recede even from that, I may; but that is then to be accounted among the Heroick flights of Charity, not her binding and indispensable Laws.

Of the unwarrantable causes of Defamation.

8. Having now set the boundaries to the excepted cases; as all instances within them will be legitimated, so all without them will (by the known rule of exceptions) be precluded, and fall under that general duty we owe to our neighbour, of tendering his credit: an obligation so Universally infringed, that 'tis not imaginable the breach should always happen within the excepted cases. When 'tis remembred how unactive the principles of Justice and Charity are now grown in the world, we must certainly impute such incessant effects, to some more victorous causes: of which it may not be amiss to point out some of the most obvious, and leave every man to examine which of them he finds most operative in himself.

Pride is a principal ingredient in Defamation.

9. In the first place I may reckon *Pride*, a humor which as it is always mounting, so it will make use of any foot-stool towards its rise. A man who affects and extraordinary splendour of reputation, is glad to find any foils to set him off: and therefore will let no fault nor folly of anothers to enjoy the shade, but brings it into the open light, that by that comparison, his own excellencies may appear the brighter. I dare appeal to the breast of any proud man, whether he do not upon such occasions, make some Pharisaical reflections upon himself, whether he be not apt to say, *I am not like other men, or as this Publican, Luke* 18. though probably he leave out the *God I thank thee.* Now he that cherishes such resentments as these in himself, will doubtless be willing to propagate them to other men, and to that end render the blemishes of others as visible as he can. But this betrays a degenerous spirit, which from a consciousness that he wants solid worth, on which to bottom a reputation, is fain to found it on the ruins of other mens. The true Diamond sparkles even in the Sun-shine: 'tis but a glow-worm vertue, that owes its luster to the darkness about it.

Another prompter to Detraction is Envy.

10. Another prompter to Detraction is *Envy*, which sometimes is particular, sometimes general. He that has a peak to another, would have him as hateful to all mankind as he is to him; and therefore as he grieves and repines at any thing that may advance his estimation, so he exults and triumphs when any thing occurs which may depress it, and is usually very industrious to improve the opportunity, nay has a strange sagacity in hunting it out. No Vulture do's more quickly scent a carcass, than an envious Person do's those *dead flies* which corrupt his neighbours ointment, *Eccles.* 10. 1. the vapour whereof his hate, like a strong wind, scatters and disperses far and near. Nor needs he any great crime to practice on: every

little

little infirmity or passion, look'd on through his Opticks, appears a mountainous guilt. He can improve the least speck or freckle into a leprosy, which shall overspread the whole man: and a cloud no *bigger than a mans hand*, like that of *Elisha*, 1 *Kings* 18. 44. may in an instant, with the help of prejudice, grow to the utter darkening of his reputation, and fill the whole horizon with tempest and horrour. Sometimes this Envy is general, not confin'd to any mans person, but diffused to the whole nature. Some tempers there are so malign, that they wish ill to all, and believe ill of all; like *Timon* the Athenian, who profest himself a universal manhater. He whose guilty conscience reflects dismal images of himself, is willing to put the same ugly shape upon the whole nature, and to conclude that all men are the same, were they but closely inspected. And therefore when he can see but the least glimmering of a fault in any, he takes it as a proof by his Hypothesis, and with an envious joy calls in as many Spectators as he can. 'Tis certain there are some in whose ears nothing sounds so harsh as the commendation of another, as on the contrary nothing is so melodious as a Defamation. *Plutarch* gave an apt instance of this upon *Aristides*'s banishment, whom when a mean Person had propos'd to ostracism, being ask'd what displeasure *Aristides* had done him, he replied, *None, neither do I know him, but it grieves me to hear every body call him a just man.* I fear some of our keenest accusers now adays may give the same answer. No man that is eminent for Piety (or indeed but moral vertue) but he shall have many insidious eyes upon him *watching for his halting*: and if any the least obliquity can be espied, he is used worse than the vilest malefactor: for such are tried but at one bar, and know the utmost of their doom, but these are arraigned at every Table, in every Tavern. And at such variety of Judicatories, there will be as great variety of sentences; only they commonly concur in this one, that he is an Hypocrite, and then what complacency, what triumph have they in such a discovery? There is not half so much Epicurism in any of their most studied luxuries, no spectacle affords them so much pleasure, as a bleeding fame thus lying at their mercy.

Another occasion of Detraction is flattery to a Patron.

11. Another sort of Detractors there are, whose designs are not so black, but are mean and sordid, much too light to be put in balance with a neighbours Credit. Of those some will pick up all the little stories they can get, to humor a Patron: an artifice well known by those trencher guests, who, like Rats, still haunt the best Provisions. These men do almost come up to a literal sense of what the *Psalmist* spoke in a figurative, *Psal.* 14. *and eat up People for bread*, tare and worry men in their good names, that themselves may eat. It was a Curse denounced against *Eli's* off-spring, *that they should come and crouch for a morsel of bread*, 1 *Sam.* 2. 39. But such men court this as a preferment, and to bring themselves within the reach of it, stick not to assume that vilest office of common Delators. There are others, who when they have got the knowledge of another mans fault, think it an endearing thing to whisper it in the ear of some friend or confident. But sure if they must needs sacrifice some secret to their friendship, they should take *David's* rule, and *not offer that which cost them nothing.* If they will express their confidence, let them acquaint them with their own private crimes. That indeed would show something of trust: but those experiments upon another mans cost, will hardly convince any considering person of their kindness.

Another occasion of Defamation is the itch of telling news.

12. There still remains a yet more trifling sort of Defamers, who have no deliberate design which they pursue in it, yet are as assiduous at the Trade as the deeper contrivers. Such are those who publish their neighbours failings as they read Gazets, only that they may be telling News: an Itch wherewith some Peoples tongues are strangely over-run, who can as well hold a glowing Coal in their mouths, as keep any thing they think New; nay will sometimes run themselves out of breath, for fear lest any should serve them as *Abimaaz* did *Cushi*, 2 *Sam.* 18. 23. and tell the tale before them. This is one of the most Childish vanities imaginable: and sure men must have Souls of a very low level, that can think it a commensurate entertainment. Others there are who use Defamatory discourse, neither for the love of News, nor Defamation, but purely for love of talk: whose speech like a flowing Current bears away indiscriminately whatever lies in its way. And indeed such incessant talkers, are usually people not of depth enough to supply themselves out of their own store, and therefore can let no forreign accession pass by them, no more than a Mill which is always going, can afford any waters to run waste. I know we use to call this Talkativeness a Feminine vice; but to speak impartially, I think, though we have given them the inclosure of the Scandal, they have not of the fault, and he that shall appropriate Loquacity to Women, may perhaps some-

times need to light *Diogenes*'s Candle to seek a man: for 'tis possible to go into Masculine company, where 'twill be as hard to edge in a word, as at a Female Gossiping. However as to this particular of Defaming, both the Sexes seem to be at a vie: and I think he were a very Critical Judge, that could determine between them.

Harmless intention will not excuse from the guilt of Defamation.

13. Now lest these later sort of Defamers should be apt to absolve themselves, as men of harmless intentions, I shall desire them to consider, that they are only more impertinent, not less injurious. For though it be granted, that the proud and envious are to make a distinct account for their Pride and Envy; yet as far as relates to the neighbour, they are equally mischievous. *Anacreon* that was choaked with a grape-stone, died as surely as *Julius Cesar* with his three and twenty wounds; and a mans reputation may be as well fool'd and prattled away, as maliciously betrayed. Nay perhaps more easily; for where the speaker can least be suspected of design, the hearer is apter to give him Credit: this way of insinuating by familiar discourse, being like those poisons that are taken in at the pores, which are the most insensibly suck'd in, and the most impossible to expel.

Of things that are bad 'tis vain to make comparisons.

14. But we need not dispute which is worst, since 'tis certain all are bad, none of them (or any that hold proportion with them) being at all able to pretend their warrant either from Justice or Charity. And then what our Saviour says in another case, will be appliable to this, *He that is not for us is against us*, *Mat.* 12. 30. He that in publishing his neighbours faults, acts not upon the dictates of Justice or Charity, acts directly in contradiction to them: for where they do not upon some particular respects command, they do implicitly and generally forbid all such discoveries.

If the occasion be trivial, the sin upon so slight a motive is the more inexcusable. Besides, in a mans fame nothing is trivial.

15. For first if the fault divulged be of a light nature, the offender cannot thereby merit so much as to be made a publick discourse. Fame is a tender thing, and seldom is tost and bandied without receiving some bruise, if not a crack: for reports we know like snow-balls gather still the farther they role, and when I have once handed it to another, how know I how he may improve it; and if he deliver it so advanced to a third, he may give his contribution also to it, and so in a successive transmitting, it may grow to such a monstrous bulk, as bears no proportion to its Original. He must be a great stranger to the world, that has not experimentally found the truth of this. How many persons have lain under great and heavy scandals, which have taken their first rise only from some inadvertence, or indiscretion? Of so quick a growth is Slander, that the least grain like that of mustard-seed, mention'd, *Mat.* 13. 32. immediately shoots up into a tree. And when it is so, it can no more be reduced back into its first cause, than a tree can shrink into that little seed from whence it first sprang. No ruins are so irreparable as those of reputation: and therefore he that pulls out but one stone towards the breach, may do a greater mischief than perhaps he intends: and a greater injustice too; for by how much the more strictly Justice obliges to reparation in case of injuries done, so much the more severely do's it prohibit the doing those injuries which are uncapable of being repair'd. In the Levitical Law he that knew his Ox was apt to gore, and yet kept him not up, stood responsible for any mischief he happen'd to do, *Exod.* 21. 29. I think there is no considering man can be ignorant how apt even litttle trivial accusations are to tear and mangle ones fame: and if yet the lavish talker restrain them not, he certainly stands accountable to God, his Neighbour, and his own Conscience, for all the danger they procure.

Many men have been irrecoverably debauch'd by having their faults detected.

16. But if the report concern some higher and enormous crime, 'tis true the delinquent may deserve the less pity, yet perhaps the reporter may not deserve the less blame: for often such a discovery serves but to enrage, not reclaim the offender, and precipitate him into farther degrees of ill. Modesty and fear of shame, is one of those natural restraints, which the wisdom of God has put upon mankind, and he that once stumbles, may yet by the check of that bridle recover again: but when by a publick detection he is fallen under that infamy he fear'd, he will then be apt to discard all caution, and to think he ow's himself the utmost pleasures of his vice, as the price of his reputation. Nay perhaps he advances farther, and sets up for a reverst sort of Fame, by being eminently wicked: and he who before was but a Clandestine disciple, becomes a Doctor of impiety. And sure it were better to let a concealed crime remain in its wish'd obscurity, than by thus rouzing it from its covert, bring it to stand at bay, and set it self in this open defiance; especially in this degenerous age, when vice has so many wel-wishers, that like a hoping party, they eagerly run in to any that will head them.

17. And

The divulging of crimes many times teaches them.

17. And this brings in a third consideration relating to the publick, to which the divulging of private (especially if they be novel, unusual) crimes, do's but an ill piece of service. Vice is contagious, and casts pestilential vapours: and as he that should bring out a plague-sick Person, to inform the world of his disease, would be thought not to have much befriended his neighbourhood, so he that displaies these vicious Ulcers, whilst he seeks to defame one, may perhaps infect many. We too experimentally find the force of ill examples. Men often take up sins, to which they have no natural propension, meerly by way of conformity and imitation. But if the instance happen in a crime, which more suits the practice of the hearers, though it cannot be said to seduce, yet it may encourage and confirm them, embolden them not only the more frequently to act, but even to avow those sins, wherein they find they stand not single: and by discovering a new accessory to their Party, invite them the more heartily and openly to espouse it.

Our great concern to conceal our own faults, is a full proof of the injustice of divulging those of others.

18. These are such effects as surely do very ill correspond with that Justice and Charity we owe either to particular Persons, or to mankind in General. And indeed no better can be expected, from a Practice which so perfectly contradicts the grand rule both of Justice and Charity, the doing as we would be done to. That this do's so, every man has a ready conviction within him, if he please but to consult his own heart. Alas with what solicitude do we seek to hide our own guilts, what false dresses, what varnishes have we for them? There are not more arts of disguising our Corporal blemishes, than our moral: and yet whilst we thus paint and parget our own deformities, we cannot allow any the least imperfection of anothers to remain undetected, but tear off the veil from their blushing frailties, and not only expose, but proclaim them. And can there be a grosser, a more detestable partiality than this? God may sure in this instance (as in mamy others) expostulate with us as he did with Israel, *Ezekiel* 33. *Are not your ways unequal?* What Barbarism, what inhumanity is it thus to treat those of the same common nature with our selves, whom we cannot but know have the same concern to preserve a Reputation, and the same regret to lose it, which we have? And what a shame is it, that the Evangelical precept, of doing as we would be done to, which met with so much reverence from Heathens, that *Severus* the Emperor prefer'd it to all the Maxims of Philosophers, should be thus contemn'd and violated by Christians, and that too upon such slight inconsiderable motives as usually prevail in this case of Defamation?

Calumny returns back upon its author.

19. But we are not to consider this fault only in its root, as it is a defect of Justice and Charity, but in its product too, as it is a Seminary of more Injustice and Uncharitableness. These disadvantageous reports we make of our neighbours, are almost seen to come round: for let no man perswade himself, that the hearers will keep his counsel any better than he do's that of the defam'd Person. The softest whisper of this kind, will find others to Eccho it, till it reach the ears of the concern'd Party, and perhaps with some enhancing circumstances too. And when 'tis consider'd how unwilling men are to hear of their faults, though even in the mildest and the most charitable way of admonition, 'tis not to be doubted a publick Defamation will seem disobliging enough to provoke a return; which again begets a rejoinder, and so the quarrel is carried on with mutual recriminations: all malicious inquires are made into each others manners, and those things which perhaps they did in closets, come to be proclaim'd upon the house-top: so the wild-fire runs round, till sometimes nothing but blood will quench it; or if it arrive not to that, yet it usually fixes in an irreconcilable feud. To this is often owing those distances we see among friends and relations; this breeds such strangeness, such animosities amongst neighbours, that you cannot go to one, but you shall be entertain'd with invectives against the other; nay perhaps you shall lose both, because you are willing to side with neither.

By it peace is forfeited.

20. These are the usual consequences of the liberty of the Tongue. And what account can any man give to himself, either in Christianity or Prudence, that has let in such a train of mischiefs, meerly to gratify an impotent childish humor of telling a tale? Peace was the great Legacy Christ left to his followers, and ought to be guarded, though we expose for it our greatest temporal concerns, but cannot without despight to him, as well as our brethren, be thus prostituted.

The employment is most disgraceful.

21. Yet if we consider it abstractedly, from these more solemn mischiefs which attend it, the meer levity and unworthiness of it sets it below an ingenious Person. We generally think a tatler and busy-body a title of no small reproach: yet truly I know not to whom it more justly belongs, than to those, who busy themselves first in learning, and then in publishing the faults of others: an employment which the

Apostle thought a blot, even upon the weaker sex, and thinks the prevention of such importance, that he prescribes them to change their whole condition of life; to convert Widowhood (though a state which in other respects he much prefers, 1 *Cor.* 7. 8.) into Marriage, rather than expose themselves to the temptation, 1 *Tim.* 5. 13, 14. And if their impotence cannot afford excuse for it, what a debasement is it of mens nobler faculties to be thus entertain'd? The Historian gives it as an ill indication of *Domitian*'s temper, that he employ'd himself in catching and tormenting Flies: and sure they fall not under a much better character, either for wisdom, or good nature, who thus snatch up all the little fluttering reports they can meet with to the perjudice of their neighbours.

Censure is a branch of Detraction.

22. But besides this divulging the faults of others, there is another branch of Detraction naturally springing from this root, and that is censuring and severe judging of them. We think we have not well play'd the Historians when we have told the thing, unless we add also our remarks and animadversions on it. And although 'tis, God knows, bad enough to make a naked relation, and trust it to the severity of the hearers; yet few can content themselves with that, but must give them a sample of rigour, and by the bitterness of their own censure invite them to pass the like: a process contrary to all rules of Law or Equity, for the plantiff to assume the part of a Judge. And we may easily divine the fate of that mans fame, that is so unduly tried.

Every man sets up a tribunal, to judge his neighbour.

23. 'Tis indeed sad to see how many private tribunals are every where set up, where we scan and judge our neighbours actions, but scarce ever acquit any. We take up with the most incompetent witnesses, nay often suborn our own surmises and jealousies, that we may be sure to cast the unhappy Criminal. How nicely and scrupulously do we examine every circumstance, (would God we were but half as exact in our own penitential inquisitions) and torture it to make it confess something which appears not in the more general view of the fact, and which perhaps never was in the actors intention? In a word we do like witches with their Magical Chymistry, extract all the venom, and take none of the allay. By this means we confound the degrees of sins, and sentence deliberate and indeliberate, a habit or an act all at one rate, that is commonly, at the utmost it can amount to, even in its worse acception: and sure this were a most culpable corruption in judgment, could we shew our commission to judge our brethren.

This practice of judging is an invasion of Gods right of Judicature.

24. But here we may every one of us interrogate our selves in our Saviours words, *Who made me a Judge? Luke* 12. 14. And if he disclaim'd it, (who in respect of his Divinity had the Supream right) and that too in a case wherein one (at least) of the Litigants had desir'd his Interposition; what a boldness is it in us to assume it, where no such appeal is made to us, but on the contrary the party disowns our Authority? Nay (which is infinitely more) 'tis superseded by our great Law-giver, in that express prohibition, *Mat.* 7. 1. *Judge not*, and that back'd with a severe penalty, *that ye be not judged*. As God hath appropriated vengeance to himself, so has he Judicature also; and 'tis an invasion of his peculiar, for any (but his Delegates the lawful Magistrates) to pretend to either. And indeed in all private Judgments so much depends upon the intention of the Offender, that unless we could possess our selves of Gods Omniscience, 'twill be as irrational as impious to assume his Authority. Until we know mens hearts, we are at the best but imperfect Judges of their Actions. At our rate of judging St. *Paul* had surely passed for a most malicious Persecutor, whereas God saw he *did it ignorantly in unbelief*, and upon that intuition had *mercy on him*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 13. 'Tis therefore good counsel which the Apostle gives,

'Tis advisable to remit all judgment of our neighbours to the great assize.

1 *Cor.* 4. 5. *Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come.* For though 'tis said *the Saints shall Judge the world*, 1 *Cor.* 6. 3. yet it must be at the great Assize, and he that will needs intrude himself into the office before the time, will be in danger to be rather Passive than Active in the Judicatory. I do not here advise to such a stupid Charity, as shall make no distinction of Actions. I know there is a wo pronounc'd as well to those who *call evil good, as good evil.* Surely when we see an open notorious sin committed, we may express a detestation of the Crime, though not of the Actor; nay it may sometimes be a necessary Charity, both to the Offendor, and to the innocent spectators, as an Amulet to keep them from the Contagion of the Example. But still even in these cases, our sentence must not exceed the evidence, we must judge only according to the visible undoubted circumstances, and not aggravate the crime upon presumptions and conjectures; if we do, how right soever our guesses may be, our judgment is not, but we are as St. *James* speaks, *Judges of evil thoughts*, Chapter 2. v. 4.

25. Indeed

25. Indeed this rash judging is not only very unjust both to God and man, but it is an act of the greatest pride. When we set our selves in the Tribunal, we always look down with contempt on those at the Bar. And certainly there is nothing do's so gratify, so regal a haughty humor, as this piece of usurp'd Soveraignty over our Brethren: but the more it do's so, the greater necessity there is to abstain from it. Pride is a hardy kind of vice, that will live upon the barest pasture: you cannot starve it with the most industrious mortifications: how little need is there then of pampering and heightning it? which we cannot more effectually do, than by this censorious humor: for by that we are so perpetually employ'd abroad, that we have no leisure to look homeward, and see our own defects. We are like the inhabitants of *Ai*, *Joshua* 8. so eager upon our pursuit of others, that we leave our selves expos'd to the ambushes of Satan, who will be sure still to encourage us in our chase, draw us still farther and farther from our selves, and cares not how zealous we are in fighting against the crimes of others, so he can but keep that zeal from recoiling upon our own.

Censuring is the effect of Pride.

26. Lastly this judging others is one of the highest violations of Charity. The Apostle gives it as one of the properties of that grace, that *it thinks no evil* (*i.e.*) is not apt to make severe constructions, but sets every thing in the fairest light, puts the most candid interpretations, that the matter will bear. And truly this is of great importance to the reputation of our neighbours. The world we know is in many instances extreamly govern'd by opinion, but in this 'tis all in all; it has not only an influence upon it, but is that very thing: reputation being nothing but a fair opinion and estimation among others. Now this opinion is not always swayed by due motives: sometimes little accidents, and often fancy, and oftenest prepossession governs it. So that many times he that puts the first ill Character, fixes the stamp, which afterwards goes currant in the world. The generality of people take up prejudices (as they do religions) upon trust: and of those that are more curious in enquiring into the grounds, there are not many who vary on the more charitable hand, or bring the common sentence to review with intent to moderate, but to inhance it. Men are apt to think it some disparagement to their acuteness and invention, if they cannot say something as sharp upon the subject, as hath been said before; and so 'tis the business of many to lay on more load, but of few to take off: and therefore he that passes the first condemnatory sentence, is like the incendiary in a popular tumult, who is chargable with all those disorders to which he gave the first rise, though that frees not his Abettors from the share of the guilt.

Is the highest violation of Charity.

27. And as this is very uncharitable in respect of the injury offer'd, so also is it in reflection on the grand rule of Charity. Can we pretend to love our neighbour as our selves, and yet shall our love to him have the quite contrary effects to that we bear our selves? Can self-love lessen our beam into a mote, and yet can our love to him magnify his mote into a beam? No certainly, true Charity is more sincere, do's not turn to us the reverse end of the perspective, to represent our own faults at a distance, and in the most diminutive size, and yet shuffle the other to us when we are to view his. No, these are Tricks of Legerdemain we learn in another School, even his whose stile is *the accuser of the brethren*. We know how frequently God protests against false weights and false measures. And sure 'tis not only in the shop or market that he abhors them, they are no lese abominable in conversation than in traffick. To buy by one measure and sell by another, is not more unequal, than it is to have these differing standards for our own and our neighbours faults, that our own shall weigh, in the Prophet Jeremies Phrase, *lighter than vanity*, *yea nothing*, and yet his (though really the lighter) shall prove *Zacharies* talent of lead. This is such a partiality, as consists not with common honesty, and can therefore never be reconcil'd with Christian Charity: and how demurely soever such men may pretend to sanctity, that interrogation of Gods presses hard upon them, *Shall I account them pure with the wicked ballances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? Micha* 6. 11. Such bitter invectives against other mens faults, and indulgence or palliation of their own, shews their zeal lies in their spleen, and that they consider not so much what is done, as who do's it: and to such the sentence of the Apostle is very applicable, *Rom.* 2. 1. *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thy self, for thou that judgest doest the same thing.* But admit a man have not the very same guilts he censures in another, yet 'tis sure every man has some, and of what sort soever they be, he desires not they should be rigorously scan'd; and therefore by the rule of Charity, yea and Justice too, ought not to do that which he would not suffer. If he can

And most inexcusable partiality.

find extenuations for his own crimes, he is in all reaſon to preſume others may have ſo for theirs: the common frailty of our nature, as it is apt alike to betray us to faults, ſo it gives as equal ſhare in the excuſe; and therefore what I would have paſs for the effect of impotency or inadvertence in my ſelf, I can with no tolerable ingenuity give a worſe name to in him.

Detraction is as imprudent as it is unchriſtian.

28. We have now view'd both theſe branches of Detraction, ſeen both the ſin and miſchiefs of them, we may now join them together in a concluding obſervation, which is, that they are as imprudent as they are unchriſtian. It has been receiv'd among the Maxims of civil life, not unneceſſarily to exaſperate any body; to which agrees the advice of an ancient Philoſopher, Speak not evil of thy neighbour, if thou doeſt, thou ſhalt hear that which will not fail to trouble thee. There is no Perſon ſo inconſiderable, but may at ſome time or other do a diſpleaſure: but in this of Defaming men need no harneſſing, no preparation; every man has his weapons ready for a return: ſo that none can ſhoot theſe arrows, but they muſt expect they will revert with a rebounded force, not only to the violation of Chriſtian Unity (as I have before obſerv'd) but to the Aggreſſors great ſecular detriment, both in fame, and oftentimes intereſt alſo. Revenge is ſharp-ſighted, and over-looks no opportunity of a retaliation, and that commonly not bounded as the Levitical ones were, *An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*, *Exod.* 21. 24. no nor by the larger proportions of their reſtitutions *four-fold*, *Exod.* 22. 1. but extended to the utmoſt power of the inflicter. The examples are innumerable of men who have thus laid themſelves open in their greateſt concerns, and have let looſe the Hands as well as Tongues of others againſt them, meerly becauſe they would put no reſtraint upon their own: which is ſo great indiſcretion, that to them we may well apply that of *Solomon*, *A fools mouth is his deſtruction, and his lips are the ſnare of his ſoul.*

This generally prevailing practice, would excuſe it ſelf, by the pretence of zeal againſt vice.

29. And now who can ſufficiently wonder, that a practice that ſo thwarts our intereſt of both worlds, ſhould come univerſally to prevail among us? Yet that it do's ſo, I may appeal to the conſciences of moſt, and to the obſervation of all. What ſo common Topick of diſcourſe is there, as this of back-biting our Neighbours? Come into company of all Ages, all Ranks, all Profeſſions, this is the conſtant entertainment: And I doubt he that at night ſhall duly recollect the occurrences of the day, ſhall very rarely be able to ſay, he has ſpent it without hearing or ſpeaking (perhaps both) ſomewhat of this kind. Nay even thoſe who reſtrain themſelves other liberties, are often apt to indulge to this: many who are ſo juſt to their neighbours property, that as *Abraham* once ſaid, *Gen.* 14. 23. *they would not take from him, even from a thread to a ſhoe latchet*, are yet ſo inconſiderate of his Fame, as to find themſelves diſcourſe at the expence of that, though infinitely a greater injury than the robbing of his Coffer: which ſhews what falſe meaſures we are apt to take of things, and evinces that many of thoſe, who have not only in general abjur'd the world in their Baptiſm, but do in many inſtances ſeem to themſelves (as well as others) to have gain'd a Superiority over it; do yet in this undiſcernably yield to it the greateſt Enſign of Soveraignty, by permitting it to ſet the ſtandards and eſtimates of things, and taking its cuſtomary Preſcriptions for Laws. For what beſides this unhappy ſervility to cuſtom, can poſſibly reconcile men that own Chriſtianity, to a practice ſo widely diſtant from it? 'Tis true, thoſe that profeſs themſelves men of this world, who deſign only their portion in this life, may take it up as ſometimes conducing (at leaſt ſeemingly) to their end: but for thoſe who propoſe higher hopes to themſelves, and know that Charity is one of the main props to thoſe hopes, how fooliſhly do they undermine themſelves, when they thus act againſt their principles, and that upon no other Authority, but that of popular uſage? I know men are apt to excuſe themſelves upon their indignation againſt vice, and think that their zeal muſt as well acquit them for this violation of the ſecond Table, as it once did *Moſes* for the breaking both, *Exod.* 32. 19. But to ſuch I may anſwer in Chriſt's words, *Luke* 9. 55. *Ye know what manner of ſpirit you are of.* Meekneſs and Charity are the Evangelical graces, which will moſt recommend and aſſimilate us to him, who was meek and lowly in heart. But after all this pretext of Zeal, I fear it is but a cheat we put on our ſelves, the Elder brothers raiment only do diſguiſe the ſupplanter, *Gen.* 27. Let men truly ranſack their own breaſts, and I doubt the beſt will find there is ſomething of vanity which lies at the bottom, if it be not the poſitive ſort mention'd before of deſigning to illuſtrate my ſelf by others blemiſhes, yet at leaſt the negative, that I am unwilling to incur the contempt incident to thoſe who ſcruple at ſmall ſins. Beſides I obſerve perhaps that 'tis the common entertainment of the world, to defame their neighbours, and

if I ſtrike not in upon that Theam, I ſhall have nothing to render me acceptable company; perhaps I ſhall be reproach'd as moroſe or dull, and my ſilence ſhall be conſtrued to proceed not from the abundance of my Charity, but the defect of my Wit.

30. But ſure they that can thus argue, do hereby give a more demonſtrative proof of that defect. He whoſe wit is ſo precarious that it muſt depend only upon the folly or vice of another, had beſt give over all pretence to it. He that hath nothing of his own growth to ſet before his gueſts, had better make no invitations, than break down his neighbours encloſure, and feaſt them upon his plunder. Beſides, how pitiful an atteſtation of wit is it, to be able to make a diſgraceful relation of another? No ſcolding woman but may ſet up ſuch Trophies: and they that can value a man upon ſuch an account, may prefer the Scarabes, who feed upon dung, are remark'd by no other property, before the Bee that ſucks flowers and returns honey.

And vainly ſets up for wit.

31. But in the next place admit this reſtraint ſhould certainly expoſe one to that reproach; methinks this ſhould be no news to thoſe who know the condition of Chriſtianity is to take up the Croſs: and ſure it cannot weigh lighter than in this inſtance. What am I the worſe if a vain Talkative Perſon think me too reſerv'd? Or if he, whoſe frolick levity is his diſeaſe, call me dull, becauſe I vapour not out all my ſpirits into froth? *Socrates* when inform'd of ſome derogating Speeches one had uſed of him behind his back, made only this facetious reply, Let him beat me too when I am abſent. And he that gets not ſuch an indifference to all the idle cenſures of men, will be diſturb'd in all his tranſactions, as well as his Chriſtian: it being ſcarce poſſible to do any thing, but there will be deſcants made on it. And if a man will regard thoſe winds, he muſt, as *Solomon* ſays, *never ſow, Eccleſ.* 11. 4. He muſt ſuſpend even the neceſſary actions of common life, if he will not venture them to the being miſjudg'd by others.

Chriſtianity requires greater ſelf-denials than the reproach of wanting wit.

32. But there is yet farther conſideration in this matter: for he that upon ſuch a deſpicable motive will violate his duty in one particular, lets Satan get a main point of him, and can with no good Logick deny to do it in others. Detraction is not the only ſin in faſhion: Profaneſs, and Obſcenity, and all ſorts of Luxury are ſo too, and threaten no leſs reproach to thoſe who ſcruple at them. Upon the ſame grounds therefore that he diſcards his Charity to his neighbour, he may alſo his Piety, his Modeſty, his Temperance, and almoſt all other Vertues. And to ſpeak the truth, there is not a more fertile womb of ſin, than this dread of ill mens reproach. Other corruptions muſt be gratifi'd with coſt and induſtry, but in this the Devil hath no farther trouble than to laugh men out of their ſouls. So prolifick a vice therefore had need be weeded out of mens hearts: for if it be allowed the leaſt corner, if it be indulged to in this one inſtance, 'twill quickly ſpread it ſelf farther.

He who upon the deſpicable motive of applauſe will commit one ſin, will commit more.

33. Yet after all, this fear of reproach is a meer fallacy, ſtarted to diſguiſe a more real cauſe of fear: for the greater danger of reproach do's indeed lie on that other ſide. Common eſtimation puts an ill Character upon pragmatick medling people. For though the inquiſitiveneſs and curioſity of the hearer, may ſometimes render ſuch diſcourſe grateful enough to him, yet it leaves in him no good impreſſion of the ſpeaker. This is well obſerv'd by the ſon of *Sirach, Eccleſ.* 19. 8, 9. *Whether it be to friend or foe, talk not of other mens lives; and if thou canſt without offence, reveal them not; for he heard and obſerv'd thee, and when time cometh he will hate thee.* In a word all conſidering Perſons will be ever upon the guard in ſuch company, as foreſeeing that they will talk no leſs freely of them, than they do of others before them. Nor can the commonneſs of the guilt obviate the cenſure, there being nothing more frequent than for men to accuſe their own faults in other Perſons. Vice is like a dark Lanthorn, which turns its bright ſide only to him that bears it, but looks black and diſmal in anothers hand: and in this particular none has ſo much reaſon to fear a Defamer, as thoſe who are themſelves ſuch: for (beſides the common prudential motive) their own conſciouſneſs gives them an inward alarm, and makes them look for a retribution in the ſame kind. Thus upon the whole matter we ſee, there is no real temptation, even to our vanity, to comply with this uncharitable cuſtom, we being ſure to loſe more repute by it than we can propoſe to our ſelves to gain. The being eſteem'd an ill man will not be ballanced by the being thought pleaſant ingenious company, were one ſure to be ſo. But 'tis odds that will not be acquired by it neither, for the moſt aſſiduous tale-bearers and bittereſt revilers are often half-witted people: there being nothing more frequently obſervable, than ſuch mens aptneſs to ſpeak evil of things they underſtand not, *Jude* v. 2.

Hatred will rather be the effect of Defamation than applauſe.

Defamation is most scandalous when it proceeds from men otherwise vertuous.

34. O let not then those that have repudiated the more inviting sins, shew themselves philter'd and bewitch'd by this, but instead of submiting to the ill example of others, set a good one to them, and endeavour to bring this unchristian custom out of fashion! I am sure if they do not, they will be more deeply chargeable than others: for the more command they have over their other corruption, the more do they witness against themselves. Their remisness and willing subjection to this, besides their example when ill, is more ensnaring than other mens, and is apt to insinuate easy thoughts of the sin. Men are apt to think themselves safe while they follow one of noted piety, and the authority of his Person often leads them blindfold into his failings. Thus when *Peter* dissembled, St. *Paul* tells us that the other *Jews, and even* Barnabas *also was carried away with his dissimulation, Galat.* 2. 13. And I doubt not in this particular many are encourag'd by the liberty they see even good men take. So that such have a more accumulative guilt, for they do not only commit, but patronize the fault: the consideration whereof has kept me, I confess, longer upon this head than is proportionable to the brevity of the rest; but I think not longer than agrees with the importance of the subject.

A sin which do's so easily beset, must with greater vigilance be resisted.

35. And now since we have considered the malignity of this sin of Detraction, and yet withal find that 'tis a sin, which, as the Apostle speaks, *doth so easily beset us*, 'tis but a natural Corollary that we enforce our vigilance against it. And where the importance and difficulty are both so great, 'twill be a little necessary to consider, what are the likeliest means, the most appropriate Antidote against this so dangerous, and yet so Epidemick a disease.

This leprosy in the Tongue is to be cured not by topical applications, but alterative Medicines.

36. And here the common rule of Physick is to be adverted to, *viz.* to examine the causes, that the remedies may be adapted to them. I shall therefore in the first place desire every man seriously to study his own constitution of mind, and observe what are his particular temptations to this sin of Detraction, whether any of those I have before mention'd, as Pride, Envy, Levity, *&c.* or any other which lies deeper and is only discernible to his own inspection. Let him I say, make the scrutiny, and then accordingly apply himself to correct the sin in its first principle. For as when there is an eruption of Humor in any part, 'tis not cured meerly by outward applications, but by such alterative Medicines as purify the blood; so this Leprosy of the Tongue will still spread farther, if it be not check'd in its Spring and Source by the mortifying of those corrupt inclinations, which feed and heighten it.

In all Detraction there is some mixture of Pride.

37. This is an inquisition I must leave to every mans own Conscience, which alone can testify by what impulses he acts. Yet as the Rabbies were wont to say, that in every Signal Judgment which befel the Jews, there was some grain of the Golden Calf: so I think I may venture to say, that in all detraction, there is some mixture of Pride: and therefore I suppose a Caution against that, will be so generally seasonable, that it may well lead the Van of all other advices in this matter. And here 'tis very observable, that God who has *made of one blood all Nations of the Earth, Acts* 17. has so equally distributed all the most valuable priviledges of Human nature, as if he design'd to preclude all insulting of one man over another. Neither has he only thus insinuated it by his Providence, but has enforc'd it by his commands. In the Levitical Law we find what a particular care he takes to moderate the vigour of Judicial correction, upon this very account, lest *thy brother be despised in thine eyes, Deut.* 25. 3. So unreasonable did he think it, that the crime or misery of one, should be the exultation of another. And St. *Paul* brands it as a great guilt of the *Corinthians*, that they upon the occasion of the incestuous Person *were puffed up, when they should have mourned*, 1 *Cor.* 5. 2. When we see a dead Corps, we are not apt to insult over it, or brag of our own health and vigour; but it rather damps us, and makes us reflect, that it may (we know not how soon) be our own condition. And certainly the Spectacles of Spiritual morality should have the same operation. We have the same principle of Corruption with our lapsed Brethren, and have nothing but Gods grace, to secure us from the same effects, and by these insulting reflections forfeit that too: for *he gives grace only to the humble, James* 4. 6. St. *Paul*'s advice therefore is very apposite to this case, *Gal.* 6. 1. *Brethren if any man be overtaken in a fault, restore such a one in the spirit of Meekness, considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* In a word the falls of others ought to excite our pity towards them, our caution as to our selves, and our thankfulness to God, if he hath hitherto preserv'd us from the like, *For who made thee to differ from another?* 1 *Cor.* 4. 7. But if we spread our Sails, and triumph over these wrecks, we expose our selves to worse. Other sins like Rocks may split us, yet the lading may be preserv'd; but Pride like a Gulph swallows us up: our very vertues when so leavened, becoming

weights

weights and plummets to sink us to the deeper ruin. The counsel therefore of the Apostle, is very pertinent to this matter. *Rom.* 11. 20. *Be not high minded, but fear.*

In all temptations to Detraction, it ought to be the first reflection if we are not likewise obnoxious.

38. But God knows we can insult over others when we are not only under a possibility, but are actually involv'd in the same guilt: and then what are all our accusations and bitter censures of others, but indictments and condemnatory sentences against our selves? And we may justly expect God should take us at our word, and reply upon us as the Prophet did upon *David*, *Thou art the man.* For though our officious vehemence against anothers crime, may blind the eyes of men, yet God is not so mock'd: as therefore when a thief or murderer is detected, it gives an alarm to the whole confederacy; so when we find our own guilts pursu'd in other mens Persons, 'tis not a time for us to joyn in the prosecution, but rather by humble and penitent reflections on our selves to provide for our own safety. When therefore we find our selves (upon any misdemeanor of our brother) ready to mount the tribunal, and pronounce our sentence, let us first consider how competent we are for the office, calling to mind the decision Christ once made in the like case, *He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone, John* 8. 7. And if we did this, many perhaps of our fiercest impeachers, would think fit to retire and leave the delinquent (as they themselves finally desire to be) to the merciful indulgence of a Saviour. In short, would we but look into our own hearts, we should find so much work for our inquisition and censure, that we should not be at leisure to ramble abroad for it. And therefore as *Lycurgus* once said to one, who importun'd him to establish a popular parity in the State, Do thou, says he, begin it first in thine own family; so I shall advise those that will be judging, to practice first at home. And if they will confine themselves to that, till there be nothing left to correct, I doubt not their neighbour will be well enough secur'd against their Detractions.

'Twill also import, to consider the future judgment.

39. Another preservation against that sin is the frequent contemplation of the last and great Judgment. This is indeed a Catholicon against all: but we find it particularly apply'd by St. *Paul* to this, of judging and despising our Brethren, *Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, Rom.* 14. 10. That is the great day of Revelation and Retribution, and we are not to anticipate that by our private inquest or sentences: we have business enough to provide our own accounts against that day. And as it were a spightful folly for Malefactors that were going together to the bar, to spend their time in exaggerating each others crimes; so surely it is for us, who are all going toward that dreadful tribunal, to be drawing up Charges against one another. And who knows but we may then meet with the fate of *Daniel's* accusers, see him we censur'd, acquitted, and our selves doom'd. The penitence of the criminal may have number'd him among the Saints, when our unretracted uncharitableness may send us to unquenchable Flames. I conclude this consideration with the words of St. *James*, *There is one Law-giver who is able to save and to destroy, who art thou that judgest another? James* 4. 12.

If we must talk of others faults, let it be not to Defame, but admonish.

40. A third expedient may be, to try to make a revulsion of the humor, to draw it into another channel. If we must needs be talking of other peoples faults, let it not be to Defame, but to amend them, by converting our Detraction and backbiting into Admonition and fraternal Correption. This is a way to extract medicine out of the viper, to consecrate even this so unhallow'd a part of our temper, and to turn the ungrateful medling of a busy-body, into the most obliging office of a friend. And indeed had we that zeal for vertue, which we pretend when we inveigh against vice, we should surely lay it out this way, for this only gives a possibility of reforming the offender. But alass we order the matter so, as if we fear'd to loose the occasion of Clamour, and will tell all the world but him that it most concerns. Indeed 'tis a deplorable thing to see how universally this necessary Christian duty is neglected; and to that neglect we may in a great degree impute that strange overflowing of Detraction among us. We know the receiving any thing into our Charge, insensibly begets a love and tenderness to it (a Nurse upon this account comes often to vie kindness with the Mother:) and would we but take one another thus into our care, and by friendly vigilance thus watch over each others souls, 'tis scarce imaginable what an indearment it would create: such certainly as would infallibly supplant all our unkind reportings, and severe descants upon our brethren; since those can never take place, but when there is at least an indifference, if not an enmity.

 41. The

A farther remedy will be to suppress Curiosity.

41. The next cure I shall propose for Detraction, is to substract its nourishment, by suppressing all Curiosity and inquisitiveness concerning others. Were all Supplies thus cut off, it would at last be subdued. The King of *Ethiopia* in a vie of Wit with the King of *Egypt*, propos'd it as a Problem to him, to drink up the Sea, to which he reply'd, by requiring him first to stop the access of Rivers to it: and he that would drain this other Ocean, must take the same course, dam up the avenues of those Springs which feed it. He that is always upon the scent, hunting out some discovery of others, will be very apt to invite his neighbours to the Quarry; and therefore 'twill be necessary for him, to restrain himself from that range: not like jealous States, to keep Spies and Pensioners abroad to bring him intelligence; but rather discourage all such officious pick-thanks: for the fuller he is of such informations, the more is his pain if he keep them in, and his guilt if he publish them. Could men be perswaded to affect a wholsome ignorance in these matters, it would conduce both to their ease and innocence: for 'tis this Itch of the Ear, which breaks out at the Tongue: and were not Curiosity the Purveior, Detraction would soon be starv'd into a tameness.

The making our neighbours condition our own, is a farther remedy.

42. But the most infallible receit of all, is the frequent recollecting, and serious applying of the grand rule, of doing as we would be done to: for as Detraction is the violation of that, so the observation of that must certainly supplant Detraction. Let us therefore when we find the humor fermenting within us, and ready to break out in Declamations against our Brethren, Let us, I say check it with this short question, Would I my self be thus us'd? This voice from within, will be like that from heaven to St. *Paul*, which stopt him in the height of his carrier, *Acts* 9. 4. And this voice every man may here, that will not stop his ears, or gag his conscience, it being but the Echo of that native Justice and Equity which is implanted in our hearts: and when we have our remedy so near us, and will not use it, God may well expostulate with us, as he did with the Jews, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel*? Ezra 33. 11.

The greatest difficulty is to be in earnest in the desire of a cure.

43. These are some of those many receits which may be prescrib'd against this spreading disease. But indeed there is not so much need to multiply remedies, as to perswade men to apply them. We are in love with our Malady, and as loth to be cured of the Luxury of the Tongue, as St. *Augustine* was of his other Sensuality, against which he prayed with a Caveat, that he might not be too soon heard. But 'tis ill dallying, where our Souls are concern'd: for alas 'tis they that are wounded by those darts, which we throw at others. We take our aim perhaps at our Neighbours, but indeed hit our selves: herein verifying in the highest Sense that Axiom of the Wise man, *He that diggeth a pit, shall fall into it; and he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him*, *Prov*. 26. 27. If therefore we have no tenderness, no relentings to our Brethren, yet let us have some to our selves, so much compassion, nay so much respect to our precious immortal Souls, as not to set them at so despicable a price, to put them in balance with the satisfying of a petulant peevish vanity. Surely the shewing our selves ill-natur'd (which is all the gains Detraction amounts to) is not so enamouring a design, that we should sacrifice to it our highest interest. 'Tis too much to spend our breath in such a pursuit, O let not our Souls also exhale in the vapour, but let us rather pour them out in Prayers for our Brethren, than in accusations of them: for though both the one and the other will return into our own bosoms, yet God knows to far differing purposes, even as differing as those wherewith we utter them. The Charity of the one like kindly exhalations will descend in showers of blessings, but the rigour and asperity of the other, in a severe doom upon our selves, for the Apostle will tells us, *He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy*, *James* 2. 13.

SECT. VII.

Of Scoffing and Derision.

Scoffing has folly and deformity for its object, as Detraction has vice.

1. THERE is also another fault of the Tongue injurious to our Neighbour, and that is Derision and Mockery; the striving to render others as ridiculous and contemptible as we can. This in respect of the subject matter differs from the other of Detraction, as much as folly or defor-

deformity do's from vice: yet since injuries as well as benefits are to be measured by common estimation, this may come in balance with the other. There is such a general aversation in human nature to contempt, that there is scarce any thing more exasperating. I will not deny but the excess of that aversation may be level'd against Pride, yet sure scorn and disdain never sprung from Humility, and therefore are very incompetent Correctors of the other; so that it may be said of that, as once it was of *Diogenes*, that he trampled on *Plato*'s Pride with greater of his own.

A scoff imprints indelible Characters.

2. Nor is this injury enhanced only by the resentment of the sufferer, but also by the way of inflicting it. We generally think those are the severest marks of infamy, which are the most indelible. To be burnt in the hand or Pilloried, is a more lasting reproach than to be scourged or confin'd; and it is the same in this case, for here commonly Wit is the Lictor, which is arm'd with an edg'd tool, and leaves scars behind it. The reproach of rage and fury seem to be writ in Chalk or Lead, which a dispassionate hearer easily wipes out, but those of Wit are like the Gravers Burine upon Copper, or the corrodings of Aqua-fortis, engrave and indent the Characters that they can never be defaced. The truth of this daily experience attests. A dull contumely quickly vanishes, no body thinking it worth remembring; but when 'tis steel'd with Wit, it pierces deep, leaves such impressions in the fancy of the hearers, that thereby it gets rooting in the memory, and will scarce be eradicated: nay sometimes it happens to survive both speaker and hearer, and conveighs it self to posterity; it being not unusual for the sarcasms of Wit to be transmitted in story. And as it thus gives an edge, so also do's it add wings to a reproach, makes it fly abroad in an instant. Many a poor mans infirmities had been confin'd to the notice of a few Relations or Neighbours, had not some remarkable strain of Drollery scatter'd and dispers'd them. The Jest recommends the Defamation, and is commonly so incorporate with it, that they cannot be related apart. And even those who like it not in one respect, yet are many times so transported with it in the other, that they chuse rather to propagate the contumely, than stifle the conceit. Indeed Wit is so much the *Diana* of this age, that he who goes about to set any bounds to it must expect an *uproar*, *Acts* 19. 28. or at least to be judged to have imposed an envious inhibition on it, because himself has not stock enough to maintain the trade. But however sharp or unexpected the censure may seem to be, yet 'tis necessary that plain downright truth should sometimes be spoken, and I think that will bear me out, if I say that 'tis possible men may be as oppressive by their parts, as their power; and that God did no more design the meaner intellectuals of some for triumphs to the Pride and Vanity of the more acute, than he did the possessions of the less powerful, as a prey to the rapine and avarice of the mighty.

Quickness of Wit cannot be more perverted, than in Derision.

3. And this suggests a yet farther aggravation of this sin, as it is a perverting of Gods design; and abuse of the talent he has committed to their trust. Ingenuity and quickness of parts, is sure to be reckon'd in the highest ranks of Blessings, an instrument proper for the most excellent purposes; and therefore we cannot suppose the Divine wisdom, so much short of Human, as not in his intention to assign it to uses worthy of it. Those must relate either to God, our selves, or our Neighbours. In respect of God, it renders us more capable of contemplating his Perfections, discerning the Equity and Excellence of his Laws, and our obligations to obedience. In regard of our Selves, it makes us apprehend our own interest in that obedience; makes us tractable and perswasible, contrary to that Brutish stubbornness of the *Horse and Mule*, which the Psalmist reproaches, *Psal.* 32. 9. Besides it accommodates us in all the concerns of Human life, forms it self into all those useful contrivances, which may make our being here more comfortable: especially it renders a man company to himself, and in the greatest dearth of Society, entertains him with his own thoughts. Lastly, as to our Neighbours, it renders us useful and assistant. All those discoveries and experiments, those Arts and Sciences, which are now the common treasure of the world, took their first rise from the ingenuity of particular Persons: and in all Personal exigencies wherein any of us are at any time involv'd, we need not be told the usefulness of a wise adviser. Now all these are employments commensurable to the faculty from whence they flow, and that answer its excellence and value; and he that so bestows his talent, gives a good account of his trust. But I would fain know under which of these Heads Derision of our Neighbours comes in: certainly not under that of being assistant to him. It would be a sorry relief to a poor indigent wretch, to lavish out wit upon him, in up-

braiding of his misery. And is not this a parallel case? Is it not the same Barbarism, to mock and reproach a man that wants the gifts of Nature, as him that wants those of Fortune? Nay perhaps it may be more; for a Beggar may have impoverish'd himself by his own fault, but in Natural defects there is nothing to be charged, unless we will fly higher, and arraign that Providence that hath so dispensed. In a word, as the Superfluities of the Rich are by God assign'd as the Store-house of the Poor, so the Abilities of the Wise are of the Ignorant: for 'tis a great mistake, to think our selves Stewards in some of Gods gifts, and Proprietors in others. They are all equally to be employed, according to the designation of the Donour, and there is nothing more universally design'd by him, than that mankind should be equally helpful to one another. Those therefore whom God hath blest with higher degrees of sagacity and quickness, ought not to look down on others as the objects of their contempt and scorn, but rather of their care and pity, endeavouring to rescue them from those mischiefs, to which their weakness may expose them, remembring still, that God might have changed the Scene, and made themselves what they see others. It is part of *Job*'s justification of his integrity, that he was *eyes to the Blind, and feet to the Lame, Job* 29. 15. (*i. e.*) he accommodated his assistances to all the wants and exigencies of others: and sure 'tis no less the part of a good man to do it in the Mental than in the Corporeal defects.

Laughing is as much the property of the Idiot as of the Wit.

4. But alas many of us would rather put a stumbling-block in the way of the Blind, pull away the Crutch from the Lame, that we may sport our selves to see them tumble: such a sensuality we have in observing and improving the imperfections of others, that it is become the grand excellence of the Age to be Dextrous at it, and Wit serves some men for little else. We are got indeed into a merry world, Laughing is our main business; and if because it has been made part of the Definition of a man, that he is Risible, his manhood consisted in nothing else. But alas if that be all the use men have of their understandings, they were given them to little purpose, since meer Idiots can laugh with as much pleasure, and more innocence than they; and it is a great instance how extreams may be brought to meet, that the excess of Wit in the one, and of Folly in the other, serve but to produce the same effect.

Derision goes on to make seriousness and sobriety to be foppery: and then scoff at them.

5. Yet so voracious is this humor now grown, that it draws in every thing to feed it. There is not game enough from the real folly of the world, and therefore that which is the most distant from it must be stamp'd with its mark. 'Tis a known story of the Fryer, who on a fasting day bid his Capon be Carp, and then very Canonically eat it; and by such a transubstantiating power our Wits bid all seriousness and consideration be formality and foppery, and then under that name endeavour to hunt it out of the world. I fear moral honesty fares not better with some of them than moral prudence. The old Philosophical vertues of Justice, Temperance, and Chastity, are now hist off the stage, as fit only for that Antiquated set of Actors; and he that appears in that Equipage, is by many thought more ridiculous, than he that walks the street in his Ancestors trunk-hose. Nay indeed vice it self is scarce secure if it have not the grand accomplishment of impudence: a pure blushing sinner is to be laught out of his Modesty, though not out of his sin; and to be proof against their scorns, he must first be so against all the regrets of his own mind.

Nor do's it stop there, but flies in the face of piety.

6. And if meer Ethnick vertue, or shamefac'd vice have this treatment, Christian Piety must expect worse: and so indeed it finds, its Professors being beyond all others expos'd to their scorn and contempt. Nor is it strange it should be so, such men being *made*, as it is *Wisd.* 2. 14. *to reprove their ways*, they think in their own defence they are to deride theirs. This is it indeed which gives a secret sting and venom to their reproaches: other men they abuse as an exercise of their Wit, but these in defence of their Party. So *Julian* after his Apostacy, thought it a more effectual way to persecute the Christians by taunts and ironies, than by racks and tortures, as thinking it more possible to shame, than fright them out of their Religion. And the stratagem seems to have been reassumed by many in this age, and I fear with too great success: for I doubt not, there are divers who have herded themselves amongst these profane Scoffers, not that they are convinced by their reasons, but terrified by their contumelies; and as some *Indians* are said to worship the Devil, that he may not hurt them, so these chuse to be active, that they may not be passive in the contempts flung upon Religion: such men forget the dreadful denunciation of Christ against those that shall *be ashamed of him and his words*, *Matth.* 8. 38.

7. As

7. As for those who, upon a juster estimate, find the advantages of Piety worthy to be chosen, and take it with all its accessory ignominies, they have the encouragement of very good company in their sufferings. The Psalmist long ago had his share, when not only *Those that sate in the gate spake against him, but the drunkards made songs upon him*, *Psal.* 69. 12. 'Twas always the Prophet *Jeremies* complaint, *I am in Derision daily, every one mocketh me*, *Jer.* 20. 7. Nay our blessed Lord himself was derided in his life by the Pharisees, *Luke* 16. 14. mocked and reviled at his death by the Priests, the Elders, the Souldiers, nay by casual Passengers, *Matth.* 27. 39. And shall the servant think himself greater than his Lord? Shall a Christian expect an immunity from what his Saviour has born before him? (He that do's so, is too delicate a member for a crucified head.) No sure, let us rather animate our selves, as the Apostle exhorts, by *considering him who* as well *despised the shame*, as *endured the cross* for us, *Heb.* 12. 2. and who has not only given an examble, but proposed a reward, a Beatitude for those who are *reviled for righteousness sake*, *Matth.* 5. 11. And when this is soberly ponder'd, 'twill sure make it easy for us to resolve with holy *David* in a like case, *I will be yet more vile*, 2 *Sam.* 6. 22.

This entertainment the Prophets and Apostles and our Saviour had from the world.

8. But to return from this digression to those who thus unhappily employ their parts, let me propose to them, that they would borrow every day some few minutes from their mirth, and seriously consider, whether this be (I need not say a Christian, but) a manly exercise of their faculties. Alas when they have rallied out the day from one company to another, they may sum up their account at night in the Wise mans simile, their *Laughter has been like the crackling of throns under a pot*, *Eccles.* 7. 6. made a little brisk noise for the present, and with the sparkles perhaps annoyed their Neighbours, but what real good has it brought to themselves? All that they can fancy is but the repute of Wit: but sure that may be more attainable some other way. We find the world affected to new things, and this of Derision and abuse of others is so beaten a road, that perhaps the very variety of a new way would render it acceptable. They are the lighter substances that still swim away with the stream, the greater and more solid bodies do sometimes stop the current: and sure 'twere a noble essay of a mans parts to stem this tide, and by a more useful application of their own faculties, convince others that theirs might be better employ'd. 'Tis said of *Anacharsis*, that at a feast he could not be got to smile at the affected railleries of common Jesters, but when an ape was brought in he freely laugh'd, saying, an ape was ridiculous by nature, but men by art and study. And truly 'tis a great contempt of human nature to think their intellects were given them for no better end, than to raise that laughter which a brute can do as well or better.

Scoffing is a mean and scurrilous, as well as highly criminal practice.

9. I would not be thought to recommend such a Stoical sowerness, as shall admit of nothing of the chearful pleasant part of Conversation. God has not sure been more rigid to our Minds than to our Bodies: and as he has not so devoted the one to toil, but that he allows some time to exercise them in recreation as well as labour, so doubtless he indulges the same relaxation to our Minds, which are not always to be scrued up to the height, but allowed to descend to those easinesses of Converse, which entertain the lower faculties of the Soul. Nor do I think those are ill employ'd in those little skirmishes of Wit, which passes familiarly between intimates and acquaintances, which besides the present divertisment, serve to whet and quicken the Fancy. Yet I conceive this liberty is to be bounded with some cautions: as first in these encounters, the Charge should be powder not Bullets, there should nothing be said, that should leave any ungrateful impressions, or give any umbrage of a spightful intent. The world wants not experiments of the mischiefs have hapned by too severe Railleries: in such Fencings jest hath proved earnest, and Florets have turn'd to Swords, and not only the Friendship, but the men have fallen a Sacrifice to a Jest.

There may be innocent skirmishes of wit, but then they must not fight at sharps.

10. Secondly this is to have the same restriction with all other recreations, that it be made a divertisement, not a trade. 'Tis an insinuating thing, and is apt to encroach too much upon our time, and God knows we have a great deal of business in this world, and much more for the next, which will not be done with laughing: and therefore 'tis not for us to play away too much of that time, which is exacted by more serious concerns. 'Tis sure we shall die in Earnest, and it will not become us, to live altogether in Jest. But besides this stealth of our time, 'tis apt to steal away mens hearts too, make them dote so upon this kind of entertainment, that it averts them from any thing more serious. I believe I may appeal to some who have made this their business, whether it go not against the hair with them to set to any thing

Also it must be diversion, not trade.

else, and having espoused this as their own excellence, they are willing to decry all others, that they may the more value themselves upon this. By this means it is, that the gift of Raillery has in this age, like the lean Kine, devoured all the more solid worthy qualifications, and is counted the most reputable accomplishment. A strange inverted estimate thus to prefer the little ebullitions of Wit, before solid reason and judgment. If they would accommodate their Diet at the same rate, they would eat the Husk, rather than the Kernel, and drink nothing but froth and bubbles. But after all, Wisdom is commonly at long running justified even of her Despisers; these great Idolaters of Wit often dashing themselves upon such Rocks, as make them too late wish their Sails had been less, and their Ballast more. For the preventing therefore of more such wrecks, I wish the present caution may be more adverted to, not to bestow an unproportionable part of our time or value on this slight exercise of mans slightest Faculty.

Also confin'd to persons present.

11. A third Caution in this matter, is to confine our selves to present Company, not to make absent Persons the subject of our mirth. Those freedoms we use to a mans face, as they are commonly more moderate, so they are more equitable, because we expose our selves to the like from him; but the back-blows are disingenuous, and give suspicion we intend not a fair trial of Wit, but a cowardly murder of a mans fame. 'Twas the precept of the Philosopher, *Deride not the absent*, and I think it may well be so of the Politician: there being nothing more imprudent as to our civil concerns than the contrary liberty. For those things never die in the company they are first vented in (nay perhaps the hearer is not willing his wit should so soon expire;) and when they once take air, they quickly come to the notice of the derided Person, and then nothing in the world is more disobliging. 'Twas a sober precept given one, not so much as to laugh in compliance with him that derides another, for you will be hated by him he derides. And if an accessary be hated, sure much more the principal: and I think I may say there are many can sooner forgive a solemn deep contrivance against them, than one of their jocular reproaches: for he that designs, seems to acknowledge them considerable, but he that mocks them, seems to think them too low for any thing but contempt: and we learn from *Aristotle*, that the measure of anger is entirely taken thence, men being so far provoked, as they imagine they were slighted or affronted. In meer secular wisdom it will therefore become men to consider, whether this trade be like to turn to account, or whether it be worth the while, at once to make a jest and an enemy.

Scoffing has this reward that it makes God and men its enemies.

12. And if it be imprudent to make man our enemy, 'tis much more to make God so by levelling our blows at any thing sacred: but of that I have already had occasion to speak, and shall not repeat; only give me leave to say, that besides the profaner sorts of jests, which more immediately reflect on him, he is concern'd in all the unjust reproaches of our brethren, our love to them being confirm'd by the same divine Sanction with our reverence to him: and sure nothing is more inconsistent with that love, than the exposing them to that contempt we are our selves so impatient of. In a word, what repute soever this practice now has of Wit, it is very far from wisdom to provoke God that we may also disoblige man: and if we will take the Scripture estimate, we shall find a Scorner is no such honourable an Epithet as we seem to account it. *Solomon* do's almost constantly set it in opposition to a Wise man, thus it is, *Prov*. 9. 8. and again Chap. 13. 1. and many other places; and on the other side, closely links it with the Fool: and that not only in title but in punishment too, *Judgments are prepared for scorners; and stripes for the back of fools*, *Prov*. 19. 29. So that if our Wits think not *Solomon* too dull for their Cabal, we see what a turn he will give to their present verdict.

Especially when beyond the ostentation of wit, it designs the doing mischief.

13. And if these reproaches, which aim only at ostentation of Wit, be so unjustifiable, what shall we say to those, that are drawn with blacker lines, that are founded in Malice and Envy, or some undermining design? Every man that is to be supplanted cannot always be attacked with a down right battery: perhaps his integrity may be such, that, as 'twas said of *Daniel* Chap. 6. 4. *they can find no occasion against him*: and when they cannot shake the main Fort, they must try if they can possess themselves of the out-works, raise some perjudice against his discretion, his humor, his carriage, and his most extrinsick adherence, and if by representing him ridiculous in any of these they can but abate mens reverence to him, their confidence of him will not long hold out: bare honesty without some other adornment, being look'd on as a leaf-less tree, no body will trust himself to its shelter. Thus the enemies of *Socrates*, when they could no other ways suppress his reputation, hired *Ari-*

stophanes

stophanes a Comick Poet to personate him on the stage, and by the insinuation of those interludes, insensibly conveyed first a contempt, then a hatred of him into the hearts of the people. But I need not bring instances of former times in this matter, these being sufficiently verst in that mystery.

14. It is not strange that men of such designs, should summon all their Wit to the service, make their Railieries as picquant as they can, that they may wound the deeper: but me thinks 'tis but a mean office they assign their Wit, to be (I will not say the Pander, that being in this age scarce a title of reproach, but) the executioner or hangman to their malice. Christ bids us *be wise as Serpents*, yet adds withal *harmless as Doves*; but here the Serpent has quite eat up the Dove, and puts a Vulture in the place, a creature of such sagacity and diligence in pursuit of the prey, that 'tis hard for any art or innocence to escape its talons.

Hereby wit is put to the vile office of being hangman to malice.

15. There is yet another sort of Contumelious Persons, who indeed are not chargeable with that circumstance, of ill employing their Wit, for they use none in it. These are people whose sole talent is Pride and Scorn; who perhaps have attained the Sciences of dressing themselves fine, and eating well, and upon the strength of those excellencies, look fastidiously, and speak disdainfully of any who want them, concluding if a man fall short of their Garniture at the Knees and Elbowes, he is much inferiour to them in the Furniture of his Head. Such people think crying, Oh ridiculous! is an ample Confutation of any thing can be said, and so they can but despise enough, are contented not to be able to say why they do so. These are, I confess, the most innocent kind of Deriders in respect of others, what they say having not edge enough to cause any smart. The greatest hurt they do is to themselves, who though they much need, yet are generally little capable of a rescue, and therefore I shall not clog the present discourse, with any advice to them: I shall chuse rather to conclude, with enforcing my Suit to the former, that they would soberly and sadly weigh the account they must one Day give of the employment of their Parts, and the more they have hitherto embezled them, the more to endeavour to expiate that Unthriftiness, by a more careful Managery for the future; that so instead of that vain, empty, vanishing Mirth they have courted here, they may find a real, full, and eternal Satisfaction in the Joy of their Lord.

The most insipid Scoffers, are the supercilious and fastidious.

SECT. VIII.

Of Flattery.

1. THE last of Verbal injuries to our Neighbour which I shall mention, is Flattery. This is indeed the fatallest wound of the Tongue, carries least Smart, but infinitely more of Danger, and is as much inferiour to the former, as a Gangrene is to a Gall or Scratch; this may be sore and vexing, but that stupifying and deadly. Flattery is such a Mystery, such a Riddle of iniquity, that its very softnesses are its cruellest rigour, its Balm corrodes, and (to comprise all in the Psalmists excellent Description) *its words are smoother than oyl, and yet be they very swords*, *Psal.* 56. 21.

Flattery is the most fatal wound of the Tongue.

2. But besides the mischiefs of it to the Patient, 'tis the most dishonouring, the most vilifying thing to the Agent. I shall not need to impannel a Jury either of Moralists or Divines, every mans own breast sufficiently instructing him in the unworthiness of it. 'Tis indeed a collective accumulative Baseness, it being in its Elements a compound and a complex of the most sordid, hateful qualities incident to Mankind. I shall instance in three, *viz*. Lying, Servility, and Treachery, which being detestably deform'd single, must in Conjunction make up a loathsome monstrous Guilt. Now though Flattery has two Branches, yet these lie so at the Root, as equally to influence both: for whether you take it as it is the giving of praise where it is not due, or the professing of kindness which is not real, these Properties are still its Constitutive parts.

As dishonorable to the agent as mischeivous to the patient.

3. And first we may take Lying to be the very corner Stone of the Fabrick; for take it away, and the Whole falls to the ground. A Parasite would make but a lean trade of it, that should confine himself to truth. For though 'tis possible so to order the manner and circumstances, as to flatter even in the representing a mans

Lying is its Principal ingredient.

real vertues to him, yet commonly if they do not falsify as to the kind, they are forc'd to do it as to the degree. Besides as there are but few such subjects of Flattery, so neither are men of that Worth so receptive of it. Such sort of addresses are less dangerous to those who have the perspicuity to see through them: so that these Merchants are under a necessity of dealing with the more ignorant Chapmen, and with them their counterfeit wares will go off best. It is indeed strange to consider, with what gross impudent falshoods men of this trade will court their Patrons. How many in former ages have not only amast together all sublunary excellencies, but have even ransacked heaven to supply their Flattery, Deified their Princes, and perswaded them they were Gods, who at last found they were to die like men? And though this strain be now out-dated, yet perhaps 'tis not that the vice is grown more modest, but that Atheism has robb'd it of that Topick. Those that believe no God, would rather seem to annihilate than magnify the Person to whom they should apply the title. But I do not find that the Practice has any other bounds. A great mans vices shall still be called vertues, his deformities, beauties, and his most absurd follies, the height of ingenuity. Such a subtil Alchymist is this Parasite, that he turns all he touches into gold, imaginary indeed as to the deluded Person, but oft-times real to himself. Nor is Lying less material to the other part of Flattery, the Profession of service and kindness. This needs no evidencing, and to attempt it would be a self-confutation: for if those Professions be true, they are not Flattery; therefore if they be Flattery, they must needs be Lies. It will be almost as needless to expatiate on the Baseness and meanness of that sin; for though there is no Subject that affords more matter for Declamation, yet Lying is a thing that is ashamed of it self, and therefore may well be remitted to its own convictions. 'Tis *Aristotles* observation, that all Elements but the Earth, had some Philosopher or other, that gave it his vote to be the first productive Principle of all things: and I think we may now say, that all Crimes have had their Abettors and fautors, some body that would stand up in their defence; only Lying is so much the dregs and refuse of wickedness, that none has yet had Chimistry enough to sublimate it, to bring it into such a reputation, that any man will think fit to own it: the greater wonder that what is under so universal a reproach, should be so commonly admitted in practice. But this we may make an estimate, what the whole body of Flattery is, when in one limb of it we find so much corruption.

It involves servility and abjectness of mind.

4. A second is Servility and Abjectness of humor: and of this there needs no other proof than has been already given; this charge being implicitly involv'd in the former of Lying, the condescending to that being a mark of a disingenuous spirit. And accordingly the nobler Heathen look'd on it as the vice of Slaves and Vassals, below the liberty of a free man, as well as an honest. But though I need no other evidence to make good the accusation, yet every Sycophant furnishes me with many supernumerary proofs. Look upon such a one, and you shall see his eyes immoveably fixt on his Patrons face, watching each look, each glance, and in every change of his countenance (like a star-gazer) reading his own destiny, his ears chain'd (like gally-slaves at the oar) to his dictate, sucking in the most insipid discourses with as much greediness, as if they were the Apothegms of the seven Sages, his Tongue tuned only to Panegyricks and acclamations, his feet in a winged motion upon every nod or other signification of his pleasure: in a word, his whole body (as if it had no other spirits than what it derived from him) varies its postures, its exercises, as he finds agreeable to the humor he is to serve. And can humanity contrive to debase it self more? Yes it can, and do's too often, by enslaving its Diviner part too, taking up not only opinions, but even crimes also in compliance, playing the incarnate Devil, and helping to act those villanies which Satan can only suggest: and if this be not a state of abject slavery, sure there is none in the world. *Plutarch* tells us, that *Philoxenus* for despising some dull Poetry of *Dionysius*, was by him condemned to dig in the quarries: from whence being by the mediation of friends remanded, at his return *Dionysius* produced some other of his verses, which as soon as *Philoxenus* had read, he made no reply, but calling to the waiters, said, *Let them carry me again to the quarries.* And if a heathen Poet could prefer a corporal slavery before a mental, what name of reproaches is loud enough for them, who can submit to both, in pursuit of those poor sordid advantages they project by their Flatteries? Nor is this baseness more observable in these mean fawnings and observances, than it is in the protestations of Kindness and Friendship. Love is the greatest gift any man has to bestow, and Friendship the sacredest of all moral bonds: and to prostitute these to little pitiful designs, is sure one of the basest

cheats

cheats we can put upon our common nature, in thus debasing her purest and most currant Coin, which by these frequent adulterations is become so suspected, that scarce any man knows what he receives. But Christian Charity is yet worse used in the case: for that obliging to all sincerity, is hereby induced to give gold for dross, exhibit that *Love in deed and in truth*, which is returned only *in word and in tongue*, 1 *John* 3. 18. And so it do's in those who observe its rules: but in those who own, yet observe them not, 'tis yet a greater sufferer, by labouring under the scandal of all their dissimulations. It was once the Character given Christians, even by their enemies, *Behold how they love one another*, but God knows we may now be pointed out by a very differing mark, *Behold how they deceive and delude one another*. And sure this violation we herein offer to our Religion, do's not allay but aggravate the baseness of this practice: for if in the other we sell our selves, in this we sell our God too; sacrifice our interest in him to get a surreptitious title to the favour of a man. And this I conceive do's in the second place not much commend the art of Flattery which is built up of so vile materials.

And also treachery.

5. And to compleat this infamous composition, in the third place Treachery comes in; a crime of so odious a kind, that to name it is to implead it: yet how intrinsick a part this is of Flattery, will need no great skill to evidence, daily experience sufficiently doing it. 'Tis a common observation of Flatterers, that they are like the Heliotrope, open only towards the Sun, but shut and contract themselves at night, and in cloudy weather. Let the object of their adoration be but eclipsed, they can see none of those excellencies which before dazled their eyes: and how ever inconstant they may be in it to others, they are indeed very constant to themselves, true to their fixt principle, of courting the greatness not the man; in pursuit whereof their old Idol is often made a sacrifice to their new: all malicious discovery is made of their falling friend, to buy an interest in the rising one. Of this there are such crouds of examples in Story, that it would be impertinent to single out any, especially in an age that is fitter to furnish presidents for the future, than to borrow of the past times. But supposing the Parasite not actually guilty of this base revolt, (which yet he seldom fails to be upon occasion) yet is he no less Treacherous even in the height of his Blandishments, and while he most courts a man, he do's the most ruinously undermine him. For first he abuses him in his understanding, precludes him from that which wise men have judged the most essential part of Learning, the knowledge of himself, from which 'tis the main business of a Flatterer to divert him. And to this abuse there is another inevitably consequent: for this ignorance of his faults or follies, necessarily condemns him to the continuing in them, it being impossible for him to think of correcting either the one or the other, who is made believe he has neither. This is like the treachery of a bribed officer in a Garrison, who will not let the weak parts be fortified, and lays the man as open to assaults, as the Town. Yet this is not all, he do's not only provide for the continuance, but the improving of his crimes and errors, which alas are too prolifick of themselves, but being cultivated and manured with perpetual soothings and encouragements, grow immeasurably luxurious. And accordingly we see that men used only to applauses, are so swell'd with them, that their insolences are intolerable. And this they are sometimes taught to their cost, when they happen among free men, who will not submit to all they say, nor commend all they do. And finding these uneasy contradictions when they come abroad, they are willing to retire to their most complaisant company: and so this Sycophant Devil having once got them within his circle, may enchant them as he pleases, lead them from one wickedness to another. And as *Caligula* and other voluptuous Emperours, by being adored as Gods, sunk in their sensuality below the Nature of man, so these celebrated Persons are by that false veneration animated to all those reproachful practices, which may expose them to a real contempt: their follies, as well as their vices still get head, till they answer the description the Wise man gives of the old Giants, *Who fall away in the strength of their foolishness*, *Ecclus.* 16. 7.

Which is enhanc'd by being acted under the disguise of friendship.

6. And sure he that betrays a man to all these mischiefs, may well be thought perfidious. But that which infinitely amplifies and enhances the Treachery is, that all this is acted under the notion and disguise of a friend: a relation so venerable, that methinks 'tis the nearest secular transcript of the treason, which is storied of those who have administred Poison in the Eucharist. The name of a friend is such an endearment, as nothing human can equal. All other natural or civil ties take their greatest force from this. What signifies an unfriendly Parent, or Brother, or Wife? 'Tis friendship only that is the cement which really and effectively combines

mankind: and therefore we may obſerve, that God reckoning up other relations, illuſtrates them by ſeveral notes of endearment, but when he comes to that of friendſhip, 'tis *the friend who is as thine own ſoul*, *Deut.* 13. 6. nothing below the higheſt inſtance was thought expreſſive enough of that union. What a Legion of Fiends then poſſeſſeth men that can break theſe chains, *Matt.* 5. 4. nay that can hammer and forge thoſe very chains into Daggers and Stillettoes, and make their friendſhip an engine of ruine. This ſure is the blackeſt colour wherein we can view a Paraſite, his falſe light makes the ſhadow the more diſmal: as the Ape has a peculiar deformity above other brutes by that aukward and ungraceful reſemblance he has to a man, ſo ſure a Flatterer is infinitely the more hateful for being the ugly counterfeit of a Friend. And as this Treachery lies at the bottom of the Panegyricks, ſo alſo do's it of all the careſſes and exuberant kindneſſes of a Flatterer, which if they aimed not at any particular end of circumvention, muſt yet in the general be Treacherous by being falſe. A man looks on the love of his friend as one of his richeſt poſſeſſions (upon which account the Philoſopher thought friends were to be inventoried as well as goods.) What a defeat and diſcomfiture is it to a man, when he comes to uſe this wealth, to find it all falſe mettle, ſuch as will not anſwer any of thoſe purpoſes for which he depended on it. There cannot ſure be a greater Treachery, than firſt to raiſe a confidence, and then deceive it. But beſides this fundamental falſneſs, there are alſo many incidental Treacheries, which fall in upon occaſion of particular deſigns. A pretence of kindneſs is the univerſal ſtale to all baſe projects: by this men are robb'd of their fortunes, and women of their honour: in a word all the wolfiſh deſigns walk under this ſheeps cloathing, and as the world goes, men have more need to beware of thoſe who call themſelves friends, than thoſe who own themſelves enemies.

Nothing is ſo odious as a barefaced Flatterer.

7. Theſe are the lineaments of this vice of Flattery, which ſure do together make up a face of moſt extream deformity. I might upon a true account add another, and charge it with folly too. I am ſure according to the Divine eſtimate it is always ſo: and truly it do's not ſeldom prove ſo in the ſecular alſo. Men of this art do ſometimes drop their vizard before they have got the prize, and then there is nothing in the world that appears ſo contemptible, ſo ſilly; a barefaced Flatterer being every bodies ſcorn. The ſhort is, wherever this game is played, there is always a fool in the caſe: if the Paraſite is detected, it falls to his ſhare: if he be not, to his whom he deludes. But at the beſt 'tis but ſubtilty and cunning he can boaſt of, and if he can in his own fancy raiſe that to the opinion of true wiſdom, 'tis a ſign he is come round to practice his deceits upon himſelf, and is as much his own Flatterer as he has been others.

'Tis ſtrange ſo diſingenuous a practice ſhould be found with perſons of condition.

8. And now I know not whether it be more ſhame or wonder, to ſee that men can ſo put off ingenuity, and the native greatneſs of their kind, as to deſcend to ſo baſe, ſo ignoble a vice: yet alas we daily ſee it done, and that not only by the ſcum and refuſe of the people, ſuch as *Job* ſpeaks of, *who are viler than the earth*, Chap. 30. 8. but by Perſons of all conditions. Flattery like a ſpring forc'd upwards aſcends, as cares are by the Wiſe man ſaid to deſcend, *Eccluſ.* 40. 4. *from him that weareth a crown to him that weareth a linnen frock*: all intermedial degrees are but like pipes, which as they ſuck from below, ſo tranſmit it ſtill upwards. There are few ſo low but find ſome body to Cajole and Flatter them. Some intereſt or other may ſometimes be to be ſerved even upon the meaneſt, and thoſe that find themſelves thus ſolicited for benefits, are eaſily taught by it how to addreſs to their immediate ſuperiours, from whom they expect greater: and as 'tis thus handed from one rank to another, the art ſtill is more ſubtilized and refined (God help poor Princes the while, who commonly meet with the Elixir, and quinteſſence of this venom:) and thus it paſſes through all ſtates and conditions: as they are paſſive on the one ſide, and are Flattered by ſome, ſo they are active on the other, and Flatter others.

An evidence to what a low ebb, not only Chriſtianity, but generoſity is grown.

9. I ſay all conditions, I do not ſay all Perſons in thoſe conditions, for no truly generous ſoul can ſtoop ſo low: but 'tis too evident to what a low ebb Generoſity as well as Chriſtianity is grown, by the numbers of thoſe who thus degrade themſelves, every little petty intereſt being thought worth theſe baſe ſubmiſſions. And truly it is hard to find, by what Topick of perſwaſion to aſſault ſuch men. The meanneſs, or the ſin will ſcarce be diſſwaſives to thoſe who have reconciled themſelves to both: if any thing can be pertinently ſaid to them, it muſt be upon the ſcore of Intereſt, for that being their grand principle, they can with no pretence diſclaim the inferences drawn thence.

10. Let

10. Let them therefore duly ballance the advantages they project from this practice with the mischiefs and dangers of it. What they expect, is commonly either Honour or Wealth, these they hope may be acquired by their prostrations to those, who can dispense or procure them. 'Tis true, as Honour signifies Greatness and Power, it is sometimes attain'd by it, but then as it signifies Reputation and esteem, 'tis as sure to be lost. He that thus ascends, may be look'd on with fear, but never with reverence. Now I think 'tis no good bargain to exchange this second notion of Honour for the first, for besides the difference in the intrinsick value, 'tis to be consider'd how tottering a Pinacle unmerited Greatness is. He that rais'd him to satisfy his humor at one time, can (with more ease and equal justice) throw him down at another: and when such a man do's fall, he falls as without pity, 'so without remedy, has no foundation on which to rebuild his fortune: his Sycophanting arts being detected, that Game is not to be play'd the second time, whereas a man of a clear reputation, though his bark be split, yet he saves his Cargo, has something left towards setting up again, and so is in capacity of receiving benefit not only from his own industry, but the friendship of others. A sound piece of Timber, if it be not thought fit for one use, yet will be laid by for another: and an honest man will probably at one time or other be thought good for something.

'Twere worth considering what return can be express'd, to the price paid down by the Flatterer.

11. As for the other aim, that of Wealth, 'tis very possible that may sometimes be compassed; and well it may, the Flatterer, having several Springs to feed it by. For he that has a great Patron, has the advantage of his countenance and Authority, he has that of his bounty and liberality, and he has another (sometimes greater than both) that of his negligence and deceivableness. But yet all these acquisitions, are many times like Fairy money, what is brought one night, is taken away the next. Men of this mold seldom know how to bear prosperity temperately, and it is no new thing to see a Privado carry it so high, as to awake the jealousy of his promoter, which being assisted by the busy industry of those who envy his fortune, 'twill be easy enough to find some flaw in his Gettings, by which to unravel the whole Web: an event that has been oft experimented not only in the private managery of Families, but in the most publick administrations. And these are such hazards, that laid all together would much recommend to any the Moral of *Horace*'s Fable, and make one chuse the Country Mouse's plain fare with safety, rather than the delicacies of the City with so much danger. This then is the state of the prosperous Parasite: but alas how many are there who never arrive to this, but are kick'd down e're they have climb'd the two or three first rounds of the Ladder, whose designs be so humble, as not to aspire above a Major-Domo, or some such domestick preferment, (for in this trade there are adventurers of all sizes) but upon all these considerations, methinks it appears no very inviting one to any. At the long run an honest freedom of speech will more recommend a man, than all these sneaking flatteries: we have a very wise mans word for it, *he that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favour, than he that flattereth with his lips*, Prov. 28. 23.

The design of getting wealth is as unfortunate as the hope of favour.

12. But after all that hath or can be said, the suppression of Flattery will most depend upon those Persons to whom it is addrest: if it be not repulsed there, nothing else will discourage it, and if it be, 'tis crush'd in the egg, and can produce no viper. These Vultures prey only on carcasses, on such stupid minds, as have not life and vigour enough to fray them away. Let but Persons of quality entertain such customers with a severe brow, with some smart expression of dislike, those Leeches will immediately fall off. In *Sparta* when all Laws against theft prov'd ineffectual, at last they fixt the penalty on them that were robb'd, and by that did the business: and in the present case, if 'twere made as infamous to be flatter'd as 'tis to flatter, I believe it might have the like effect. Indeed there is pretence enough to make it so: for first as to Wit, the advantage is clear on the Flatterers side: he must be allowed to have more of that (which in this age is more than a counterpoise to honesty) and as for vertue, the balance (as to the principal motive) seems to hang pretty even, 'tis the vice of Avarice that tempts the one to Flatter, and the vice of Pride that makes it acceptable to the other. The truth is, there is the bottom of the matter: 'tis that secret confederate within, that exposes men to those assaults from without. We have generally such an appetite to praise, that we greedily suck it in without staying to examine whether it belong to us or no, or whether it be design'd as a kindness or an abuse. Other injuries rush upon us with violence, and give us notice of their approach: they may be said to come *like water into our bowels, but this like oyl into our bones*, Psal. 109. penetrates easily, undiscernably, by help of that native propension we have to receive it. 'Tis therefore the near con-

The suppression of flattery will most depend on those to whom 'tis addrest.

concern of all, especially of those whose quality most exposes them, to keep a guard upon that treacherous inmate, not to let that step into the scale to make a base Sycophant out-weigh a true friend, and when ever they are attacked with extravagant Encomiums, let them fortify themselves with this Dilemma, either they have those excellences they are praised for, or they have not: if they have not, 'tis an apparent cheat and gull, and he is of a pitiful forlorn understanding that delights to be fool'd: but if they have, they are too good to be expos'd to such worms who will instantly wither the fairest gourd, *Jon.* 4. 7.

No vertue can subsist with flattery.

For as it is said of the *Grand Siginor*, that no grass grows where his horse once treads: so we may say of the Flatterer, no vertue ever prospers where he is admitted: if he find any, he hugs it till he stifles it; if he find none, he so indisposes the soil, that no future seeds can ever take root. In fine, he is a mischief beyond the description of any Character. O let not men then act this part to themselves by being their own Parasites, and then 'twill be an easy thing to escape all others!

S E C T. IX.

Of Boasting.

The Tongue as inordinate towards God and the Neighbour, is also to mans self.

1. WE have now seen some effects of an ungovern'd Tongue, as they relate to God and our Neighbour. There is yet a third sort which reflect upon a mans self. So unboundedly mischievous is that petulant Member, that heaven and earth are not wide enough for its range, but it will find work at home too; and like the viper, that after it had devoured its companions, prey'd upon its self, so it corrodes inward, and becomes often as fatal to its owner, as to all the world besides.

Of this sort are all imprudent speeches.

2. Of this there are as many instances, as there are imprudent things said, for all such have the worst reflection upon the speaker: and therefore all that have given rules for civil life, have in order to it, but very severe restraints upon the Tongue, that it run not before the judgment. 'Twas the advice of *Zeno*, to *dip the Tongue in the mind* before one should permit it to speak. *Theophrastus* used to say, *It was safer trusting to an unbridled horse, than to intemperate speech.* And daily experience confirms the Aphorism, for those that set no guard upon their Tongues are hurried by them into a thousand indecencies, and very often into real considerable mischiefs. By this means men have proved their own delators, discover'd their own most important secrets: and whereas their heart should have kept a lock upon their Tongue, they have given their Tongue the key of their heart, and the event has been oft as unhappy as the proceeding was preposterous. There are indeed so many ways for men to lose themselves in their talk that I should do the like, if I should pretend to trace them. Besides my subject leads me not to discourse Ethically, but Christianly of the faults of the Tongue, and therefore I have all along considered the one no farther than it happens to be twisted with the other.

Boasting is a mixture of vice and folly.

3. In the present case I shall insist only upon one fault of the Tongue, which partakes of both kinds, and it is at once a vice and a folly, I mean that of Boasting and vaunting a mans self: a strain to which some mens Tongues have a wonderful glibness. No discourse can be administred, but they will try to turn the Tide, and draw it all into their own Channel, by entertaining you with long stories of themselves: or if there be no room for that, they will at least screw in here and there some intimations of what they did or said. Yea so stupid a vanity is this, that works alike upon all materials: not only their greater and more illustrious acts or sentences, but even their most slight and trivial occurrences, by being theirs, they think require a considerableness, and are forcibly imposed upon the company: the very dreams of such people strait commence prophecy, and are as seriously related, as if they were undoubted revelations. And sure if we reflect upon our Saviours rule, that *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, we cannot but think these men are very full of themselves, and to be so, is but an other phrase for being very Proud. So 'tis Pride in the heart, which is the spring that feeds this perpetual current at the mouth, and under that notion we are to consider it.

4. And

4. And truly there is nothing can render it more infamous, Pride being a vice that of all others is the most branded in Scripture as most detestable to God, and is signalized by the punishment to be so. This turned *Lucifer* out of heaven, *Nebuchadnezar* out of his Throne, nay out of Human society. And indeed it seems still to have something of the same effect, nothing rendring a man so unconversible; for it sets him above the meaner sort of company, and makes him intolerable to the better, and to compleat the parallel, he seldom comes to know himself till he be turn'd a grazing, be reduced to some extremities.

Men full of themselves, and pride are thereby made boasters.

5. But this Boasting arrogant humor, though always bad, yet is more or less so according to the Subject on which it works. If it be only on Natural excellencies, as Beauty, Wit; or accidental acquisitions, as Honour, Wealth, or the like, yet even here 'tis not only a Theft, but a Sacriledge; the glory of those being due only to the Donor, not the Receiver, there being not so much as any predisposition in the Subject to determine Gods bounty. He could have made the most deformed Beggar as handsome and as rich, as those who most pride themselves in their wealth and beauty. No man fancies himself to be his own Creatour, and though some have assumed to be the Architects of their own fortunes, yet the frequent defeats of mens industry and contrivance, do sufficiently confute that bold pretence, and evince that there is something above them, which can either blast or prosper their attempts. What an invasion then is it of Gods right, to ingross the honour of those things being done, which were not at all in their power to do? And sure the folly is as great in respect of men, as the sin is towards God. This Boasting like a heavy Nurse, overlays the Child, the vanity of that quite drowns the notice of the things in which 'tis founded, and men are not so apt to say, such a man is Handsome, Wise, or Great, as that he is proud upon the fancy of being so. In a word he that celebrates his own excellencies, must be content with his own applauses, for he will get none of others, unless it be from those fawning Sycophants, whose praises are worse than the bitterest Detraction.

Boasting of natural or acquir'd advantages is sacrilege.

6. And yet so sottish a vice is Pride, that it can make even those insidious Flatteries matter of boast, which is a much more irrational object of it than the former. How eagerly do some men propagate every little Encomium their Parasites make of them? With what gust and sensuality will they tell how such a Jest of theirs took, or such a Magnificence was admired? 'Tis pleasant to see what little Arts and dexterities they have to wind in such things into discourse: when alas it amounts to no more than this, that some have thought them fools enough to be flatter'd, and 'tis odds but the hearers will think them enough so to be laugh'd at.

The vice is so sottish to be gratified by flattery.

7. But there is yet another Subject of Boasting more foolish, and more criminal too than either of the former; and that is when men vaunt of their Piety, which if it were true, were yet less owing to themselves than any natural endowment. For though we do not all assist towards them, yet do we neither obstruct, but in the operations of Grace 'tis otherwise: we have there a principle of opposition, and God never makes us his own till he subdue that: and though he do it not by an irresistable force, but by such sweet and gentle insinuations, that we are sometimes captivated e're we are aware: yet that do's not impeach his right of conquest, but only shews him the more gracious conqueror. 'Tis true in respect of the event we have great cause of exultance and joy. Gods service being the most perfect freedom: yet in regard of the efficiency, we have as little matter of Boast, as the surprized City has in the triumphs of its victor.

Boasting of piety is a peculiar extravagance.

8. But secondly either this vaunted Piety is not real, and then 'tis good for nothing, or else by being vaunted becomes so. If it be not real, 'tis then the superadding Hypocrisy to the former sacriledge, and attempt at once to rob God and cheat men, and in the event usually renders them hateful to both, to God (who cannot be mocked) it do's so at the instant, and seldom misses to do so at last to men. An Hypocrite has a long part to act, and if his memory fail him but in any one scene, his play is spoiled: so that his hazards are so great, that 'tis as little prudent, as 'tis honest to set up the trade, especially in an age when Piety it self is at so low a price, that its counterfeit cannot pass much. But if the piety be indeed true, the Boasting it blasts it, makes it utterly insignificant. This we are told by *Christ* himself, who assures us, that even the most Christian actions of prayer, alms, and fasting, must expect no other reward (when boasted) than the sought-for applause of men, *Matt. 6*. When a man shall make his own tongue the trumpet of his Alms, or the Echo of his Prayers, he craves, or rather snatches his own reward, and must not look God should heap more upon him: the recompence of his pride

It either finds or makes the piety not real.

he may indeed look for from him, but that of his vertue he has forestall'd. In short piety is like those Lamps of old, which maintain'd their light some Ages under ground, but as soon as they took air expir'd. And surely there cannot be a more deplorable folly, than thus to lose a rich Jewel, only for the pitiful pleasures of shewing it: its the humor of Children and Idiots, who must be handling their birds till they fly away, and it ranks us with them in point of discretion, though not of innocence.

Boasting is a self undermining vice.

9. From the view of these particulars we may in the gross conclude that this ostentation is a most foolish sin, such as never brought in advantage to any man. There is no vice so undermines it self as this do's: 'tis glory it seeks, and instead of gaining of that, it loses common ordinary estimation. Every body that sees a bladder puft up, knows 'tis but wind that so swells it: and there is no surer argument of a light frothy brain, than this bubling at the mouth. Indeed there is nothing renders any man so contemptible, so utterly useless to the world: it excludes him almost from all commerce, makes him uncapable of receiving or doing a benefit. No man will do him a good turn, because he foresees he will arrogate it to himself, as the effect of his merit: and none (that are not in some great exigence) will receive one from him, as knowing it shall not only be proclaimed, but magnified much above the true worth. There seems to be but one purpose for which he serves, and that is to be sport for his company: and that he seldom fails to be, for in these gamesome days men will not lose such an opportunity of divertisement, and therefore will purposely give him hints, which may put him upon his Rhodomontades. I do not speak this by way of encouragement to them, but only to shew these vapourers, to what scorn they expose themselves, and what advantage they give to any that have a mind to abuse them: for they need not be at any pains for it, they do but swim with their stream; an approving nod or smile, serves to drive on the design, and make them display themselves more disadvantageously, more ridiculously, than the most Satyrical Character could possibly do.

The Boaster is a certain prey to flatterers.

10. But besides these sportive projects, such a man lays himself open to more dangerous circumventions. He that shews himself so enamour'd of praise, that (*Narcissus* like) dotes on his own reflections, is a fit prey for Flatterers, and such a Carcase will never want those Eagles: when his weak part is once discern'd, (as it must soon be when himself publishes it) he shall quickly be surrounded with assailants. The last Section has shewed the misery of a man so besieged, therefore I shall not enlarge on it here, this mention being only intended to evince how apt this vain glorious humor is to betray men to it.

It precludes to himself all means of growing wiser.

11. These are competent Specimens of the folly of this vice: but it has yet a farther aggravation, that it precludes all means of growing wiser: 'tis *Solomon*'s assertion, *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a Fool than of him*, *Prov.* 26. 12. And the reason is evident, for he discards the two grand instruments of instruction, Admonition and Observation. The former he thinks superseded by his own Perfections, and therefore when any such friendly office is attempted towards him, he imputes it either to Envy and a desire to eclipse his lustre by finding some spots, or else to Ignorance and Incapacity of estimating his worth: the one he entertains with Indignation, the other with disdainful Pity. As for Observation, he so circumscribes it within himself, that he can never fetch in any thing from without. Reading of men has been by some thought the most facile and expedite Method for acquiring Knowledge: and sure for some kinds of Knowledge it is, but then a man must not only read one Author, much less the worst one he can pick out for himself. 'Tis an old and true saying; He that is his own Pupil, shall have a Fool for his Tutor: and truly he that studies only himself, will be like to make but a sorry Progress. Yet this is the case of arrogant men, they lose all the benefit of Conversation, and when they should be enriching their Minds with forreign treasure, they are only counting over their own store. Instead of adverting to those sober discourses which they hear from others, they are perhaps watching to interrupt them by some pompous Story of themselves, or at least in the abundance of their self-sufficiency, think they can say much better things, Magisterially obtrude their own notions, and fall a teaching when 'tis fitter they should learn: and sure to be thus forward to lay out, and take no care to bring in, must needs end in a Bankrupt state. 'Tis true I confess the study of a mans self is (rightly taken) the most useful part of learning, but then it must be such a Study as brings him to know himself, which none do so little as these men, who in this are like those silly women the Apostle describes, 2 *Tim.* 3. 7. *Who are ever learning, yet never attain.*

And

And 'tis no wonder, for they begin at the wrong end, make no inquiry into their faults or defects, but fix their Contemplation only in their more splendid qualities, with which they are so dazled, that when you bring them to the darker parts of themselves, it fares with them as with those that come newly from gazing on the Sun, they can see nothing.

12. And now having dissected this swelling vice, and seen what it is that feeds the tumour, the cure suggests it self. If the disease be founded in Pride, the abating that is the most natural and proper remedy: and truly one would think that men weighing the foregoing considerations, might prove sufficient allays to it. Yet because where humors are turgent, 'tis necessary not only to purge them, but also to strengthen the infected part, I shall adventure to give some few advices by way of Fortification and Antidote.

The cure of the disease is either by revulsion;

13. In the first place, that of the Apostle offers it self to my hand, *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others, Phil.* 2. 4. A counsel which in a distorted sense seems to be too much practiced. We are apt to apply it to worldly advantages, and in that notion not to look on our own things with thankfulness, but on other mens with envy. We apply it also to errors and sins, and look not on our own to correct and reform, but on others to despise and censure. Let us at last take it in the genuine sense, and not look on our own excellencies, but those of others. We see in all things how desuetude do's contract and narrow our faculties, so that we can apprehend only those things wherein we are conversant. The droiling Peasant scarce thinks there is any world beyond his own Village, or the neigbouring Markets, nor any gayety beyond that of a Wake or Morrice; and Men who are accustom'd only to the admiration of themselves, think there is nothing beside them worthy of regard. These unbred minds must be a little sent abroad, made acquainted with those excellencies which God has bestowed on other men, and then they will not think themselves like *Gideon*'s fleece to have suck'd up all the dew of heaven: nay perhaps, they may find they rather answer the other part of the miracle; and are drier than their neighbours. Let them therefore put themselves in this course, observe diligently all the good that is visible in other men: and when they find themselves mounting into their altitudes, let them clog their wings with the remembrance of those who have out-soar'd them, not in vain opinion, but in true worth. 'Tis nothing but the fancy of singularity that puffs us up. To breathe, to walk, to hear, to see, are excellent powers, yet no body is proud of them, because they are common to the whole kind: and therefore if we would observe the great number of those that equal, or exceed us, even in the more appropriate endowments, we should not put so excessive a price upon our selves.

Or by fortifying the affected part, by enlarging our thoughts.

14. Secondly if we will needs be reflecting upon our selves, let us do it more ingenuously, more equally; let us take a true survey, and observe as well the barren as the fertile part of the soil: and if this were done, many mens value would be much short of what they are willing to suppose it. Did we but compare our Crop of Weeds and Nettles, with that of our Corn, we must either think our ground is poor, or our selves very ill husbands. When therefore the recollection of either real or fancied worth begins to make us aery, let us condense again by the remembrance of our sins and folly, 'tis the only possible service they can do us, and considering how dear they are to cost us, we had not need lose this one accidental advantage. In this sense *Satan may cast out Satan*, our vilest guilts help to eject our pride, and did we well manage this one stratagem against him, 'twould give us more cause of triumph, than most of those things for which we so spread our plumes: I do not say we should contract new guilts to make us humble, God knows we need not, we have all of us enough of the old stock, if we would but thus employ them.

By making a fair and equal reflection upon our selves.

15. In the last place I should advise those who are apt to talk big things of themselves, to turn into some other road of discourse: for if they are their own Theam, their Tongues will as naturally turn into Eulogies, as a horse do's into that Inn to which he is custom'd. All habits do require some little excess of the contrary to their cure: for we have not so just a scantling of our selves, as to know to a grain what will level the scales, and place us in the right Mediocrity. Let men therefore that have this infirmity, shun (as far as prudence and interest permits) all discourse of themselves, till they can sever it from that unhappy appendage. They will not be at all the less acceptable company, it being generally thought none of the best parts of breeding, to talk much of ones self: for though it be done so as not to argue pride, yet it do's ignorance of more worthy subjects.

And by avoiding all self-speaking.

The last step of Boasting is to brag of baseness and villany.

16. I should here conclude this Section, but that there is another sort of vaunting Talk, which was not well reducible to any of the former Heads, the subject matter being vastly distant: for in those the Boasting was founded in some either real or supposed worth, but this in Baseness and villany. There are a Generation of men, who have removed all the Landmarks which their Fathers (nay, even the Father of Spirits) have set, revers'd the common notions of Humanity, and call evil good, and good evil, and those things which a moderate impudence would blush to be surpris'd in, they not only proclaim but boast of, blow the Trumpet as much before their crimes, as other good deeds. Nay so much do they affect this inverted sort of Hypocrisy, that they own more wickedness than they act, assume to have made Practical the highest Speculations of villany, and like the Devils Knights errants, pretend to those Romantick atchievements, which the veriest Fiend Incarnate could never compass. These are such Prodigies, such Monsters of villany, that though they are the objects of Grief and Wonder, they are not of Counsel. Men who thus rave, we may conclude their brains are turned, and one may as well read Lectures at Bedlam as treat with such. Yet we know that there sharp corrections recover crazed men to Sobriety; and then their Cure lies only in the hand of Civil Justice: if that would take them at their words, receive their Brags as Confessions, and punish them accordingly, it may be a little real smart would correct this mad Itch, and teach them not *to glory in their shame*, *Phil.* 3. 19.

The consideration of this reprobate state, should affright from all steps towards it.

In the mean time let others who are not yet arrived to this height consider betimes, that all indulgent practice of sin is the direct Road to it, and according to the degrees of that indulgence, they make more or less haste. He that constantly and habitually indulges, rides upon the Spur, and will quickly overtake his Leaders, nay if it be but this one vice of vanity, it may finally bring him to their State. He that loves to brag, will scarce find exercise enough for that faculty in his vertues, and therefore may at last be tempted to take in his vices also. But that which is more seriously considerable is, that Pride is so provoking to Almighty God, that it often causes him to withdraw his *Grace*, which is a Donative he has promised only *to the humble*, *James* 4. 6. And indeed when we turn that Grace into wantonness, as the Proud man do's who is pamper'd by it into high conceits of himself, 'tis not probable God will any longer prostitute his favours to such abuse. The Apostle observes it of the Gentiles, who had in contradiction of their natural light abandon'd themselves to vile Idolatries, that God *after gave them up to a reprobate mind and vile affection*. *Rom.* 1. 25, 26. But the Proud now stifle a much clearer light, and give up themselves to as base an Idolatry, the adoration of themselves: and therefore 'tis but equal to expect God should desert them, and (as some Nations have deified their diseases) permit them to celebrate even their foulest enormities. The application of all I shall sum up in the words of the Apostle, *Rom.* 11. 21. *Take heed also lest he spare not thee.*

SECT. X.

Of Querulousness.

The boaster is most apt to be querulous.

1. TO this of Boasting may not unfitly be subjoyn'd another inordinacy of the Tongue, *viz.* murmuring and complaining. For though these faults seem to differ as much in their complexions, as Sanguine do's from Melancholly, yet there is nothing more frequent than to see them united in the same Person. Nor is this conjunction of a late date, but is as old as St. *Jude*'s days, who observes that the *murmurers* and *complainers* are the very same with those who speak *great swelling words*, *Jude* 16.

Pride obliges to both.

2. Nor are we to wonder to find them thus conjoyn'd, if we consider what an original cognation and kindred they have, they being (however they seem divided) streams issuing from the same fountain. For the very same pride which prompts a man to vaunt and overvalue what he is, do's as forcibly incline him to contemn and disvalue what he has; whilst measuring his enjoyments by that vast Idea he has form'd of himself, 'tis impossible but he must think them below him.

3. This indeed is the true original of those perpetual complainings we hear from all sorts and conditions of men. For let us pass through all Degrees, all Ages, we shall rarely find a single Person, much less any number of men exempt from this Querulous, this sullen humor: as if that breath of life wherewith God originally inspired us, had been given us not to magnify his Bounty, but to accuse his Illiberality, and like the dismaller sorts of instruments, could be tuned to no other Strains but those of Mourning and Lamentation. Every man contributes his note to this doleful Harmony, and after all that God has done to oblige and delight mankind, scarce any man is satisfied enough, I will not say to be thankful, but to be patient. For alas what Tragical complaints do men make of their infelicity, when perhaps their prosperity is as much the envious outcry of others? Every little defeat of a design, of an appetite, every little disregard from those above them, or less solemn observance from those below them, makes their *Heart hot within them*, *Psal.* 39 3. and the tongue (that combustible part) quickly takes fire and *breaks out* into extravagant exclamations. It is indeed strange to see how weighty every the triviallest thing is when a passion is cast into the scale with it, how every the slightest inconvenience or petty want preponderates hundreds of great substantial blessings: when indeed were it in an instance never so considerable, it could be no just Counterpoise. Yet so closely is this corruption interwoven with our constitution, that it has sometimes prevail'd even upon good men. *Jacob* though he had twelve sons, yet upon the supposed death of one, despis'd the comforts of all the rest, and with an obstinate sorrow resolves to *go mourning to his grave*, *Gen.* 35. 37. *David* after that signal victory which had preserv'd his life, reinstated him in his Throne, and restor'd him to the Ark and Sanctuary, yet suffer'd the loss of his rebellious son, who was the Author of his danger, to overwhelm the sense of his deliverance, and instead of Hymns and Praises, breaks out into ejaculations and effeminate wailings, 2 *Sam.* 18. 33.

This ingrateful humor is the complexion of mankind.

4. But God knows the most of our complaints cannot pretend to such considerable motives: they are not the bowels of a Father, the impresses of Nature that excite our repinings, but the impulse of our lust and inordinate appetites. Our discontents are usually such as *Ahab*'s for his neighbours vineyard, *Haman*'s for *Mordecai*'s obeisance, *Achitophel*'s for having his counsel rejected. Every disappointment of our avarice, ambition and pride, fills our hearts with bitterness and our mouths with clamour. For if we should examine the numerous complaints which sound in every corner, it would doubtless be found that the greatest part of them have some such original: and that, whether the pretended grievances be publick or private. For the first: many a man is a state-malecontent, meerly because he sees another advanced to that honour or wealth which he thinks he has better deserv'd. He is always inveighing against such unequal distributions, where the best services (such you may be sure his own are) are the worst rewarded: nor do's he ever cease to predict publick ruines, till his private are repaired. But as soon as that is done, his Augury grows more mild: and as if the state and he were like *Hippocrates*'s twins, his recruits give new vigour to that, and till his next suit is denied, every thing is well administred. So full alas men are of themselves, that 'tis hard to find any the most splendid pretences which have not something of that at the bottom: and would every man ransack his own heart, and resolve not to cast a stone till he had first clear'd it of all sinister respects, perhaps the number of our complainers would be much abated.

Grounded generally upon the slightest and worst motives.

5. Nor is it otherwise in private discontents. Men are apt to think themselves ill used by any man who will not serve their interest or their humor, nay sometimes their vices; and are prone in all companies to arraign such an unpliant Person, as if he were an enemy to mankind, because he is not a slave to their will. Nay many have quarrell'd even with their dearest friends, because they would not assist them to their own ruin, or have striven to divert them from it: so forcible are our pretentions to mutiny, that we equally take occasions from benefits or injuries.

Level'd sometimes against our neighbour.

6. But the highest and most unhappy instance of all is in our behaviour towards God, whose allotments we dispute with the same, or rather greater boldness than we do those of men. What else mean those impatient murmurs at those things which are the immediate issues of his Providence? Such are our native blemishes, diseases, death of friends, and the like. Nay what indeed are our displeasures even at those things which we pretend to fasten upon second Causes? For those being all under the subordination of the first, cannot move but by its permission. This holy *Job* well discern'd, and therefore do's not indite the *Chaldeans* or *Sabeans* for

And often against God.

his plunder, but knowing they were but instruments, he submisly acknowledges, that there was a higher agent in his loss, *The Lord hath taken away*, *Job* 1. 21. When therefore we ravingly execrate the rapine of one man, the deceit of another for our impoverishment, when we angrily charge our defamation on the malice of our maligners, our disappointments on the treachery or negligence of our friends, we do interpretatively conclude either that there is no over-ruling providence which could have restrained those events, or else (which is equally horrid) we accuse it as not having done well in permitting them. So that against whosoever we direct our clamours, their last rebound is against Heaven; this Querulous humor carrying always an implicite repugnance to Gods disposals: but where it is indulged to, it usually is its own expositour, and explicitely avows it, charges God foolishly, and by impious murmurs blasphemes that power which it cannot resist. Indeed the progress is very natural for our impatiences at men to swell into mutinies against God: for when the mind is once imbitter'd, it distinguishes not of objects, but indifferently lets fly its venom. *He that frets himself*, the Prophet tells us, *will curse his King*, nay *his God*, *Isa.* 8. 21. and he that quarrels at Gods distributions, is in the direct road to defie his Being.

The first naturally leads to the latter, and imbitters all our enjoyments.

7. By this we may estimate the danger of our discontents, which though at first they are introduced by the inordinate love of our selves, yet are very apt to terminate in hatred and Blasphemies against God. He therefore that would secure himself from the highest degree, must watch against the lowest; as he that would prevent a total Inundation, must avert the smallest breach in his Banks. Not but that even the first beginnings are in themselves well worth our guarding: for abstracting from all the danger of this enormous increase, these murmurings (like a mortiferous Herb) are poisonous even in their first Spring, before they arrive to their full maturity. To be always moralizing the Fable of *Prometheus* upon one's self, playing the Vulture upon one's own entrails, is no desirable thing, though we were accountable to none but our selves for it: to dip our tongues in gall, to have nothing in our mouths but the extract, the exhalation of our inward bitterness, is sure no great Sensuality. So that did we consult only our own ease, we might from that single Topick draw arguments enough against our mutinies.

Is degenerous and unmanly.

8. But besides our duty and use, our reputations make their plea also. Fortitude is one of the noblest of moral vertues, and has the luck to appear considerable even to those who despise all the rest. Now one of the most proper and eminent acts of that is, the bearing adverse events with evenness and temper. This passive valour is as much the mark of a great mind as the active, nay perhaps more, the latter being often owing to the Animal, this to the Rational part of man. And sure we must strangely have corrupted the principles of *Morality* as well as *Religion*, if every turbulent unruly Spirit, that fills the world with blood and rapine, shall have his ferity call'd gallantry; yet that sober courage, that maintains it self against all the shocks of Fortune, that keeps its Post in spight of the rudest encounters; shall not be allowed at least as good a name. And then on the contrary we may conclude, that to sink under every cross accident, to be still whining and complaining, crying out upon every touch, is a note of a mean degenerous soul, below the dignity of our reasonable nature. For certainly God never gave us reason for so unkind a purpose, as only to quicken and inhance the resentment of our sufferings, but rather to controle those disorders, which the more tumultuous part of us, our senses, are apt to raise in us: and we are so far men and no farther, as we use it to that end. Therefore if the dictates of Religion cannot restrain our murmurs, if we are not Christians enough to submit to the divine precepts of meekness and acquiescence: yet let us at least keep within those bounds which ingenuous nature has set us, and not by our unmanly impatiences enter common with Brutes and Animals.

Is most uneasy to others and troublesome in conversation.

9. Nay I may farther add, if neither for Gods nor our own sakes, yet for others, for human society's sake, this querulous inclination should be supprest; there being nothing that renders a man more unpleasant, more uneasy company. For (besides that 'tis very apt to vent it self upon those with whom he converses, rendring him capricious and exceptious; and 'tis a harsh, a grating sound to hear a man always in the complaining Key) no man would willingly dwell within the noise of shreeks and groans; and the exclamations of the discontented differ from those only by being more articulate. It is a very unwelcome importunity, to entertain a mans company with remonstrances of his own infelicities and misadventures, and he that will relate all his grievances to others, will quickly make himself one to them. For though he that is full of the inward sense of them, thinks it rather an ease than

oppression

oppression to speak them out, yet the case is far otherwise with his Auditors: they are perhaps as much taken up with themselves, as he is, and as little at leisure to consider his concerns, as he theirs. Alas we are not now in those primitive days, when there was as it were one common sense among Christians, when *if one member suffer'd, all the members suffer'd with it*, 1 *Cor*. 12. That Charity which gave that sympathetick motion to the whole, is now it self benumm'd, flows rarely beyond the narrow compass of our personal interest; and therefore we cannot expect that men should be very patient of our complaints who are not concern'd in the causes of them. The Priests answer to *Judas* do's speak the sense of most men in the case, *What is that to us? See thou to that, Matt*. 27. 4. I do not deny but that the discharging ones griefs into the bosom of a true friend, is both innocent and prudent: and indeed he that has such a treasure, is unkind to himself if he use it not. But that which I would disswade, is the promiscuous use of this liberty in common Conversation, the satisfying our Spleen, when we cannot ease our hearts by it, the loud declaimings at our misery, which is seldom sever'd from as severe reflections on those whom we suppose the causes of it; by which nothing can be acquired but the opinion of our Impatience, or perhaps some new grievance from some, who think themselves concern'd to vindicate those whom we asperse. In a word 'tis as indecent as it is unacceptable, and we may observe all men are willing to slink out of such company, the Sober for the hazards, the Jovial for the unplesantness. So that the murmurer seems to be turn'd off to the company of those doleful Creatures which the Prophet mentions, which were *to inhabit the ruins of Babylon, Isai*. 13. 21. For he is ill conversation to all men, though the worst of all to himself.

The murmurer seems to fit himself for the region of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

10. And now upon the force of all these considerations, I may reasonably impress the Wise mans Counsel, *Therefore beware of murmuring, Wisd*. 1. 11. And indeed it is not the precept of the Wise man alone, but of all who have made any just pretence to that title. For when we consider those excellent lectures of contentation and acquiescence, wherewith the writings of Philosophers abound, 'tis hard to say whether they speak more of instruction or reproach to us. When their confused notions of a Deity had given them such impressions of his Wisdom and Goodness, that they would not pretend to make any elections for themselves, how do's it shame our more explicite knowledge, who dare not depend on him in the smallest instance? who will not take his disposals for good, unless our senses become his securities? which amounts but to that degree of credit, which the most faithless man may expect from us, the trusting him as far as we see him. This is such a contumely to him, as the Ethnick world durst not offer him, and is the peculiar insolence of us degenerated Christians, who sure cannot be thought in earnest when we talk of singing *Hallelujahs* in the next world to him, whilst we entertain him here only with the sullen noise of murmurs and repinings. For we are not to think that Heaven will Metamorphose us on a sudden, and turn our exclamations and wild clamours into Lauds and Magnificats. It do's indeed perfect and Crown those graces which were here inchoate and begun, but no mans conversion ever succeeded his being there: for Christ has expresly told us, *That except we be converted, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*; if we go hence in our froward discontents, they will associate us with those, with whom is *Weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

SECT. XI.

Of Positiveness.

Positiveness usurps a tyranny upon the mind of others; which in the greatest slavery is free.

1. ANOTHER very unhandsome circumstance in discourse is the being over confident and peremptory, a thing which do's very much unfit men for conversation, it being look'd on as the common birth-right of mankind, that every man is to opine according to the dictates of his own understanding, not anothers. Now this Peremtoriness is of two sorts, the one a Magisterialness in matters of opinion and speculation, the other a Positiveness in relating matters of fact: in the one we impose upon mens understandings, in the other on their faith.

The first branch of it is a Magisterial imposing of speculative opinions.

2. For the first, he must be much a stranger in the world who has not met with it: there being a generation of men, who as the Prophet speaks, *Are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight, Isa.* 5.21. Nay not only so, but who make themselves the standards of wisdom, to which all are bound to conform, and whoever weighs not in their balance, be his reasons never so weighty, they write *Tekel* upon them. This is one of the most oppressive Monopolies imaginable: all other can concern only something without us, but this fastens upon our nature, yea and the better part of it too, our reason; and if it meet with those who have any considerable share of that within them, they will often be tempted to rally it, and not too tamely resign this native liberty. Reason submits only to reason, and he that assaults it with bare Authority (that which is Divine always excepted) may as well cut flame with his sword, or harden wax in the sun.

The being uncontroul'd in company is no evidence of having convinced it.

3. 'Tis true indeed these great Dictators do sometimes run down the company, and carry their Hypothesis without contest: but of this there may be divers reasons besides the weight of their arguments. Some unspeculative men may not have the skill to examine their assertions, and therefore an assent is their safest course; others may be lazy and not think it worth their pains; a third sort may be modest and awed by a severe brow and an imperious nod: and perhaps the wiser may providently foresee the impossibility of convincing one who thinks himself unerrable. Upon these or other like grounds 'tis very possible all may be silenced when never a one is convinced: so that these great Masters may often make very false estimates of their conquests, and *sacrifice to their own nets, Hab.* 1.16. when they have taken nothing.

4. Nay indeed this insolent way of proposing is so far from propagating their notions, that it gives prejudice against them. They are the gentile insinuations which pierce (as oyl is the most penetrating of all liquors;) but in these Magisterial documents men think themselves attack'd and stand upon their guard, and reckon they must part with Honour together with their Opinion, if they suffer themselves to be Hector'd out of it. Besides this imposing humor is so unamitable, that it gives an aversion to the Person; and we know how forcible personal prejudices are (though 'tis true they should not be) towards the biassing of Opinions. Nay indeed men of this temper cut themselves off from the opportunities of Proselyting others, by averting them from their company. Freedom is the endearing thing in Society, and where that is control'd, men are not very fond of associating themselves. 'Tis natural to us to be uneasy in the presence of those who assume an Authority over us. Children care not for the company of their Parents or Tutors, and men will care less for theirs, who would make them Children by usurping a Tutelage.

Nothing is more ridiculous than a concluding face put to an unconcluding argument.

5. All the inconveniences are evidently consequent to this Dogmatizing, supposing men be never so much in the right: but if they happen to be in the wrong, what a ridiculous pageantry is it, to see such a Philosophical gravity set to man-out a Solecism? A concluding Face put upon no concluding argument, is the most contemptible sort of folly in the world. They do by this sound a Trumpet to their own defeat: and whereas a modest mistake might slip by undiscern'd, these Rhodomontade errors force themselves upon mens observation, and make it as possible for men not to see, as it is not to despise them when they do. For indeed Pride is as ill link'd with Error, as we usually say it is with Beggary, and in this as well as that converts pity into contempt.

Since all men are fallible, they ought to be wary and modest.

6. And then it would be consider'd, what security any man that will be imposing has, that this will not be his case. Human nature is very fallible, and as it is possible a man may err in a great many things, so 'tis certain every man do's in something or other. Now who knows at the instant he is so positive, but this may be his erring turn. Alas how frequently are we mistaken even in common ordinary things? for as the wise man speaks, *hardly do we judge aright even in things that are before us, Wisd.* 9.16. our very senses do sometimes delude us. How then may we wander in things of abstruse speculation? The consideration of this hath with some so prevail'd, that it has produc'd a Sect of scepticism: and though I press it not for that purpose, yet sure it may reasonably be urged to introduce some modesty and calmness in our assertions. For when we have no other certainty of our being in the right, but our own perswasions that we are so, this may often be but making one error the gage for another. For God knows confidence is so far from a certain mark of truth, that 'tis often the seducer into falshood, none being so apt to lose their way as those who, out of an ungrounded presumption of knowing it, despise all direction from others.

7. Let

7. Let all this be weighed, and the result will be, that this peremptoriness is a thing that can befit no form of understanding. It renders wise men disobliging and troublesome, and fools ridiculous and contemptible. It casts a prejudice upon the most solid reasoning, and it renders the lighter more notoriously despicable: 'Tis pity good parts should be leaven'd by it, made a snare to the owners, and useless to others. And 'tis pity too that weak parts should by it be condemn'd to be always so, by despising those Aids which should improve them. Since therefore 'tis so ill calculated for every Meridian, would God all Climes might be purged from it.

Peremptoriness befits no form of understanding.

8. And as there are weighty objections against it in respect of its effects, so there are no inconsiderable prejudices in relation to its causes, of which we may reckon Pride to be the most certain and universal: for whatever else casually occurs to it; this is the fundamental constitutive principle; nothing but a great overweening of a mans own understanding being able to instate him in that Imaginary empire over other mens. For here sure we may ask the Apostles question, *Who made thee to differ from another?* When God has made Rationality the common portion of mankind, how came it to be thy inclosure? or what signature has he set upon thine, what mark of excellency, that thine should be paramount? Doubtless if thou fanciest thou hast that part of *Jacob's* blessing, *To be Lord of thy brethren, and that all thy mothers sons should bow down to thee*, *Gen.* 27. 29. thou hast got it more surreptitiously than he did, and with less effect: for though *Isaac* could not retract his mistaken benediction, God will never attest that fantastick, thou hast pronounced to thy self, with his real effective one.

Sometimes it rises from pride.

9. But there happens many times to be another ingredient besides Pride, and that is Ignorance: for those qualities however they may seem at war, do often very closely combine. He who has narrow notions, that knows but a few things, and has no glimpse of any beyond him, thinks there are no such: and therefore as if he had (like *Alexander*) no want but that of Worlds to conquer, he thinks himself the absolute monarch of all knowledge. And this is of all others the most unhappy composition: for ignorance being of it self like stiff clay, an infertile soil, when pride comes to scorch and harden it, it grows perfectly impenetrable: and accordingly we see none are so inconvincible as your half-witted people; who know just enough to excite their pride; but not so much as to cure their ignorance.

Sometimes from ignorance.

10. There remains yet a second kind of Peremptoriness which I am to speak to, and that is of those who can make no relation without an attestation of its certainty: a sort of hospitable people, who entertain all the idle vagrant reports, and send them out with pass-ports, and testimonials; who when they have once adopted a story, will have it pass for legitimate how spurious soever it originally was. These somewhat resemble those Hospitals in *Italy*, where all bastards are sure of reception, and such a provision as may enable them to subsist in the world: and were it not for such men, many a Fatherless lie would be stifled in its birth. It is indeed strange to see, how suddenly loose rumours knit into formal stories, and from thence grow to certainties; but 'tis strange to see that men can be of such profligated impudence, as knowingly to give them that advance. And yet 'tis no rarity to meet with such men who will pawn their honours, their souls, for that unworthy purpose: nay and that too, with as much impertinence as baseness, when no interest of their own, or perhaps any man else is to be served by it.

A second kind of Positiveness is in relating matters of fact.

11. This is so prodigious a thing, as seems to excite ones Curiosity to inquire the Cause of so wonderful an Effect. And here as in other unnatural productions, there are several concurrents. If we trace it from its original, its first Element seems to be idleness: this diverting a man from serious useful entertaintments, forces him upon (the usual refuge of vacant Persons) the inquiring after News, which when he has got, the venting of it is his next business. If he be of a credulous Nature, and believe it himself, he do's the more innocently impose it on others: yet then to secure himself from the imputation of Levity and too easy Faith, he is often tempted to lend some probable circumstance. Nay if he be of a proud humor, and have that miserable vanity of loving to speak big, and to be thought a man of greater correspondence and intelligence than his Neighbours, he will not bate an Ace of absolute certainty, but however doubtful or improbable the thing is coming from him it must go for an indisputable truth. This seems to be the descent of this unhappy folly, which yet is often nurst up by a mean or imprudent Education. A man that hath converst only with that lower sort of company, who durst not dispute his veracity, thinks the same false Coin will pass over the world, which

Its first element seems to be idleness, and the vanity of saying somewhat extraordinary in company.

went current amongst his Father's Servants or Tenants: and therefore we may observe that this is more usual in young men, who have come raw into company with good fortunes and ill breeding. But it is too true also that too many never loose the habit, but are as morosely positive in their Age, as they were childishly so in their Youth. Indeed 'tis impossible they should be otherwise, unless they have the wit to disentangle themselves first from the love of Flattery, and after from the company of Flatterers: for (as I have before observ'd) no vice will ever wither under their shade. I think I shall do the Reader no ill office to let in a little light upon them, and shew him some of those many mischiefs that attend this unworthy practice.

This folly engages to perjuries.

12. First it engages a man to Oaths, and for ought he knows to Perjuries. When he has lanch'd out boldly into an incredible relation, he thinks he has put his Credit upon the forlorn hope, and must take care to relieve it: and there is no succour so constantly ready at hand as that of Oaths and Imprecations, and therefore whole vollies of them are discharged upon the doubtful. Thus do we make God a witness, and our souls parties in the cause of every trifling rumour, as if we had model'd our Divinity by the Scheme of that Jesuitical Casuist, who legitimates the Killing of a man for an Apple.

And also to quarrels.

13. A second mischief is, that it betrays a man to quarrels. He that is peremptory in his own Story, may meet with another that is as peremptory in the contradiction of it, and then the two Sr. *Positives* must have a skirmish indeed. He that has attested the truth of a false, or the certainty of a doubtful thing, has brought himself into the same strait with *Balaam*'s Ass, he must either fall down flat or run upon a sword, *Num.* 22. 27. For if his Hearers do but express a diffidence, either he must sink to a downright Confession that he was a Lier, or else he must huff and bluster till perhaps he raises a counter-storm, and as he fool'd himself out of his truth, so be beaten out of the pretence to it. Indeed there is scarce any quality that do's so tempt and invite affronts as this do's: for he that can descend to such a meanness, may reasonably enough be presumed to have little (as of true worth, so) even of that which the world calls Gallantry, and so every puny sword-man will think him a good tame Quarry to venture and flesh himself upon.

Likewise it exposes to contempt.

14. In the third place it exposes him to all the contempt and scorn which either good or ill men can fling upon him: the good abominate the sin, the ill triumph over the folly of it. The truth is there can be nothing more wretchedly mean. To be a Knight of the Post to every fabulous relation, is such a sordid thing, that there can scarce any name of reproach be too vile for it. And certainly he that can pawn his faith upon such miserable terms, will by those frequent morgages quickly be snapt upon a forfeiture: or however will have his credit so impair'd by it, that no man will think his word a competent gage for the slightest concern.

The attempt to gain credit to a present affirmation, destroys it for the future.

15. And this may pass for a fourth consideration, That this Positiveness is so far from gaining credit to his present affirmation, that it destroys it for the future: for he that sees a man make no difference in the confidence of his asserting realities and fictions, can never take his measures by any thing he avers, but according to the common Proverb, will be in danger of disbelieving him even when he speaks truth. And of this no man can want conviction, who will but consult his own observation. For what an allay do we find it to the credit of the most probable event, that it is reported by one who uses to stretch? Thus unhappily do such men defeat their own designs: for while they aver stoutly that they may be believed, that very thing makes them doubted, the world being not now to learn how frequently Confidence is made a supplement for truth. Nor let any man who uses this, flatter himself that he alone do's (like *Job*'s messenger) escape the common fate: for though perhaps he meet with some who in civility or pity will not dispute the probability of his narrations, or with others who for raillery will not discourage the humor with which they mean (in his absence) to divert themselves, yet he may rest assur'd he is discern'd by all and derided for it.

Wise men avoid the reporting improbable truths.

16. It therefore concerns men who either regard their truth, or their reputation, not to indulge to his humor, which is the most silly way of shipwracking both. For he that will lay those to stake upon every flying story, may as well wager his estate which way the wind will sit next morning, there being nothing less to be confided in, than the breath of fame, or the whispers of private tale-bearers. Wise men are afraid to report improbable truths: what a fool hardiness is it then to attest improbable falsities, as it often is the luck of these Positive men to do?

17. Cer-

17. Certainly there is nothing which they design by this, which may not be obtain'd more effectually by a modest and unconcern'd relation. He that barely relates what he has heard, and leaves the hearer to judge of the probability, do's as much (I am sure more civilly) entertain the company, as he that throws down his gauntlet in attestation. He as much satisfies the itch of telling news; he as much perswades his hearers: nay very much more (for these our earnest asseverations serve but to give men suspicion that the Speaker is conscious of his own falsness:) and all this while he has his retreat secure, and stands not responsible for the truth of his relation. Nay indeed though men speak never so known and certain truths, 'tis most advisable not to press them too importunately. For boldness, like the Bravoes and Banditti, is seldom employed but upon desperate services, and is so known a Pander for lying, that truth is but defam'd by its attendance.

An unconcern'd relation, is most likely to gain belief.

18. To conclude, modesty is so amiable, so insinuating a thing, that all the rules of Oratory cannot help men to a more agreeable ornament of discourse. And if they will try in both the foregoing instances, they will undoubtedly find the effects of it: a modest proposal will soonest captivate mens reasons, and a modest relation their belief.

Modesty is a most powerful scheme of Oratory.

Sect. XII.

Of Obscene Talk.

1. THERE is another vice of the Tongue which I cannot but mention, though I know not in which of the former Classes to place it: not that it comes under none, but that 'tis so common to all, that 'tis not easy to resolve to which peculiarly to assign it, I mean obscene and immodest Talk, which is offensive to the purity of God, damageable and infectious to the innocence of our Neighbours, and most pernicious to our selves: and yet is now grown a thing so common, that one would think we were fallen into an Age of Metamorphosis, and that the Brutes did (not only Poetically and in fiction, but) really speak. For the Talk of many is so beastial, that it seems to be but the conceptions of the more libidinous Animals cloathed in human Language.

Obscenity seems to verify the fiction of brute beasts talking together.

2. And yet even this must pass for Ingenuity, and this vile descent below Humanity, must be counted among the highest strains of Wit. A wretched debasement of that sprightful Faculty, thus to be made the interpreter to a Goat or Boar: for doubtless had those creatures but the organs of Speech, their Fancies lie enough that way to make them as good company, as those who more studiously apply themselves to this sort of entertainment.

This renouncing of reason and ingenuity, passes for wit

3. The crime is comprehensive enough to afford abundance of matter for the most Satyrical zeal, but I consider the dissecting of putrid Bodies may cast such pestilential fumes, as all the benefits of the scrutiny will not recompense. I shall therefore in respect to the Reader dismiss this noisome Subject, and thereby give an example with what abhorence he should always reject such kind of discourse, remembring the advice of St. *Paul*, *That all uncleanness should not be once named among those who would walk as becometh Saints*, *Eph.* 5. 3.

Its pestilent corruption cannot be discussed without stench and danger of contagion.

The Close.

1. I HAVE now touched upon those enormities of Speech which I principally design'd to observe, wherein I have been far from making a full and exact Catalogue: therefore I would have no man take this little Tract for a just Criterion, by which to try himself in reference to his words. Yet God grant that all that read it, may be able to approve themselves even by this imperfect essay: and he that do's so, makes fair approaches towards being *that perfect man* St. *James* speaks of, *Jam.* 3. 2. these being such faults of the Tongue as are the

The Government of the Tongue has now an additional difficulty from the licence of the age.

harder to avoid, becauſe they are every day exemplified to us in common practice, (nay ſome of them recommended as reputable and ingenuous.) And it is a ſtrange inſinuative power which example and cuſtom have upon us. We ſee it in every trivial ſecular inſtance, in our very habit: thoſe dreſſes which we laughed at in our forefathers wardrobes or pictures, when by the circulation of time and vanity they are brought about, we think very becoming. 'Tis the ſame in our diet: our very palates conform to the faſhion, and every thing grows amiable to our fancies, according as 'tis more or leſs received in the world. And upon this account all ſobriety and ſtrict vertue lies now under a heavy prejudice, and no part of it more, than this of the Tongue, which cuſtom has now enfranchiz'd from all the bonds Moraliſts or Divines had laid upon it.

The greatneſs of difficulty ought to awake diligence.

2. But the greater the difficulties are, the more it ought to awake our diligence: if we lie looſe and careleſly, 'tis odds we ſhall be carried away with the ſtream. We had need therefore fix our ſelves, and by a ſober recollection of the ends for which our Speech was given us, and the account we muſt one day give of it, impreſs upon our ſelves the baſeneſs and the danger of miſemploying it. Yet a negative innocence will not ſerve our turns, 'twill but put us in the condition of him, *who wrapt up the talent he was commanded to employ*, *Matth.* 25. 25. Nay indeed 'twill be impoſſible to preſerve even that if we aſpire no farther. The Tongue is a buſy active part, will ſcarce be kept from motion: and therefore if that activity be not determin'd to good objects, 'twill be practiſing upon bad. And indeed I believe a great part of its licentiouſneſs is owing to this very thing. There are ſo few Theams of diſcourſe in uſe, that many are driven to the ill for want of better. Learning is thought Pedantick, Agriculture Peaſant-like, and Religion the moſt inſufferable of all: ſo by excluding all uſeful Subjects to converſe, we come together as St. *Paul* (in other caſes) ſays, *Not for the better, but for the worſe*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 17. And if the Philoſopher thought he had loſt that day wherein he had not learn'd ſomething worthy his notice, how many days do we worſe than loſe, by having them not only empty of ſolid uſeful acquiſitions, but full of noxious and pernicious ones? And indeed if they be the one, they will not miſs to be the other alſo: for the mind is like the ſtomach, which if it be not ſupplied with wholſome nouriſhment, will at laſt ſuck in thoſe humors with which the body moſt abounds. So that if in our converſe we do not enterchange ſober notions, we ſhall at the beſt but traffick toies and baubles, and moſt commonly infection and poiſon. He therefore that would keep his tongue from betraying himſelf or others to ſin, muſt tune it to a quite contrary Key, make it an inſtrument, an incentive to vertue, by which he ſhall not only ſecure the negative part of his duty, but comply with the poſitive alſo, in employing it to thoſe uſes for which it was given him.

All ſpeech ought to tend to the glory of God,

3. It would be too vaſt an undertaking to preſcribe to particular ſubjects of ſuch diſcourſe, nay indeed impoſſible, becauſe many of them are occaſional, ſuch as cannot aforehand be reduced to any certain account. This only in the general we may reſt upon, that all ſpeech tending to the glory of God, or the good of man, is aright directed. Which is not to be underſtood ſo reſtrictively, as if nothing but Divinity or the neceſſary concerns of human life, may lawfully be brought into diſcourſe: ſomething is to be indulged to common civility, more to the intimacies and endearments of friendſhip, and a competency to thoſe recreative diſcourſes which maintain the chearfulneſs of ſociety; all which are, if moderately uſed, within the latitude of the rule, as tending (though in a lower degree) to the well being of men, and by conſequent to the honour of God, who indulges us thoſe innocent refreſhments. But if the ſubordinate uſes come to incroach upon the higher, if we dwell here and look no farther, they then become very ſinful by the exceſs which were not ſo in their nature. That inordinacy ſets them in oppoſition to Gods deſignation, in which they were allowed only a ſecondary place. We ſhould therefore be careful to improve all opportunities of letting our tongues pay their more immediate homage to God, in the duty of prayers and praiſes, making them not only the interpreters of our pious affections, but the promoters of the like in others. And indeed he can ſcarce be thought in earneſt, who prays, *Hallowed be thy name*, and do's not as much endeavour it with men, as he ſolicites it from God.

And the good of our neighbour.

4. And if we anſwer our obligations in this point, we ſhall in it diſcharge the higheſt part of our duty to man alſo: for in whoſe heart ſoever we can implant a true reverential awe of God, we ſow the ſeed of immortality, of an endleſs happy being, the greateſt the moſt ſuperlative good whereof he is capable. Beſides in the

interim,

interim, we do by it help to manumit and releaſe him from thoſe ſervile drudgeries to vice, under which thoſe remain who live without God in the world. And theſe indeed are benefits worthy the dignity of human nature to communicate. And it is both ſad and ſtrange to ſee among the multitude and variety of Leagues that are contracted in the world, how few there are of the pious combinations; how thoſe who ſhew themſelves concern'd in all the petty ſecular intereſts of their friends, never take this at all into their care; a pregnant evidence how little true friendſhip there is among men.

5. I know ſome think they ſufficiently excuſe themſelves when they ſhift off this office to Divines, whoſe peculiar buſineſs they ſay it is. But this is as if one who ſees a poor fainting wretch, ſhould forbear to adminiſter a Cordial he has at Hand, for fear of intrenching on the Phyſicians Faculty. Many opportunities a Friend or Companion may have which a Divine may want. He often ſees a man in the very fit, and ſo may more aptly apply: for where there is an intimacy of Converſe, men lay themſelves open, diſcover thoſe paſſions, thoſe vices which they carefully veil when a ſtrange, or ſeverer eye approaches. Beſides, as ſuch a one may eaſier diſcern the diſeaſe, ſo he has better advantages for adminiſtring remedies: ſo Children will not take thoſe Medicines from the Doctors hand, which they will from a Nurſe or Mother: and we are uſually too Childiſh in what relates to our Souls; look on good counſel from an Eccleſiaſtick as a Divinity Potion, and ſet our ſtomachs againſt it; but a Familiar may inſenſibly inſinuate it into us, and e're we are aware beguile us into health. Yet Lay Perſons will needs give the Clergy the incloſure of this office, they ſhould at leaſt withdraw thoſe impediments they have laid in their way, by depoſiting thoſe prejudices which will certainly fruſtrate their endeavour. Men have in theſe latter days been taught to look on Preaching as a thing of form to the hearers, and of profit only to the Speakers, a *craft whereby*, as *Demetrius* ſays, *They get their living*, *Acts* 19. 25. But admit it were ſo in this laſt reſpect, yet it do's not infer it ſhould be ſo in the former. If it be a Trade, 'twas ſure thought (as in all Ages but this) a very uſeful one, or elſe there would never have been ſuch incouragement given to it. No State ever allotted publick certain Salaries for a ſet of Men that were thought utterly uſeleſs: and if there be uſe to be made of them, ſhall we loſe our advantages meerly becauſe they gain theirs? We are in nothing elſe ſo ſenſeleſs: no man will refuſe counſel from a Phyſician, becauſe he lives by the Profeſſion. 'Tis rather an argument on his ſide, that becauſe ſuch an intereſt of his own depends on it, he has been the more induſtrious to fit himſelf for it. But not to run farther in this digreſſion, I ſhall apply it to my purpoſe, by making this equitable propoſal, that Lay-Men will not ſo moralize the common Fable, as neither to admoniſh one another themſelves, nor ſuffer Miniſters to do it without them. And truly 'tis hard if neither of them can be granted when both ought. I am ſure all is little enough that can be done, though we ſhould have as the Prophet ſpeaks, *Precept upon precept*, *Line upon line*, *here a little and there a little*, *Iſai.* 28. 13. Mans nature is ſo unattentive to good, that there can ſcarce be too many monitors. We ſee *Satan* though he have a much ſtronger party in our inclinations, dares not rely upon it, but is ſtill employing his emiſſaries, to confirm and excite them, and if whilſt he has ſo many Agents among us, God ſhall have none, we are like to give but an ill account of our zeal either to God or our neighbour, or of thoſe tongues which were given us to glorify the one, and benefit the other. Indeed without this, our greateſt officiouſneſs in the ſecular concerns of others is no kindneſs. When we ſtrive to advance the fame, to increaſe the fortune of a wicked man, what do we do in it, but enable him to do the more miſchief, by his wealth to foment his own luxuries, and by his reputation commend them to the practice of others? He only makes his friend truly rich and great who teaches him to employ thoſe advantages aright: and would men turn their tongues to this ſort of Oratory, they would indeed ſhew they underſtood for what ends they were given them.

The care of others is ill ſhifted off to divines.

6. But as all good receives enhancement from its being more diffuſive, ſo theſe attempts ſhould not be confined to ſome one or two intimates or relatives, but be as extenſive as the common needs, or at leaſt as our opportunities. 'Tis a generous ambition to benefit many, to oblige communities: which can no way ſo well be done, as by endeavouring to ſubvert vicious cuſtoms, which are the peſt and poiſons of all ſocieties. The heathens had many ceremonies of luſtrations for their cities and countries, but he that could purify and refine their manners, would indeed attain to the ſubſtance of thoſe ſhadows. And becauſe the Apoſtle tells us

Or confin'd to friends and relations.

 that

that *Evil words corrupt good manners*, 'twould be a fundamental piece of reformation, to introduce a better sort of converse into the world: which is an instance so agreeable to my present subject, that I cannot Close more pertinently, than to commend the endeavour to the Reader, which if he have been by this Tract at all convinced of the sin and mischief of those Schemes of discourse decyphered in it, cannot be more just to his convictions, than by attempting to supplant them.

'Twere a useful attempt to set a pattern of innocent and entertaining discourse.

7. It were indeed a design worthy of a noble soul, to try to new model the Age in this particular, to make it possible for men, to be at once conversable and innocent. I know 'twill be objected, 'tis too vast a project for one or many single Persons to undertake: yet difficulties use to animate generous spirits, especially when (as here) the very attempt is laudable. But as *Christ* says of Wisdom, so may we of Courage. The Children of this world are more daring than the Children of light. The great corrupters of discourse have not been so distrustful of themselves: for 'tis visible to any that will reflect, that 'tis within a mans memory since much of this monstrous exorbitancy of discourse grew in fashion, particularly the Atheistical and Blaspemous. The first propugners of it were but few, and durst then but whisper their black rudiments, yet the world now sees what a Harvest they have from their devilish industry.

Which could not fail to relish with men not utterly vitiated.

8. And shall we give over our Clime as forlorn and desperate, and conclude that nothing which is not venomous will thrive in our Soil. Would some of parts and authority but make the experiment, I cannot think that all places are yet so vitiated, but that they may meet with many, who would relish sober and ingenuous discourse, and by their example be animated to propagate it to others; but as long as Blasphemy, Ribaldry, and Detraction, set up for Wit, and carry it without any competition, we do implicitly yield that title we dispute not: and 'tis hard to say whether their triumphs be more owing to the boldness of ill men, or the pusillanimity of the good. What if upon the trial they should meet with the worser of *St. Paul*'s fate at Athens, *That some will mock*, *Acts* 17. 32. yet perhaps they may partake of the better also, and find others that would be willing to *hear them again*, and some few at least *may cleave unto them*. And sure they are too tender and delicate, that will run no hazard, nor be willing to bear a little share in that prophane drollery, with which an Apostle was, and their God is daily assaulted: especially when by this exposing themselves, they may hope to give some check to that impious liberty. However besides the satisfaction of their own consciences, they may also gain this advantage by the attempt, that it may be a good test by which to try their company. For those whom they find impatient of innocent and profitable converse, they may assure themselves can only ensnare not benefit them; and he is a very weak Gamester, that will be drawn to play upon such terms, as make it highly probable for him to lose, but impossible for him to win. Therefore in that case the advice of *Solomon* is very proper, *Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of Knowledge*, *Prov.* 14. 7.

The undertaker in this design must be sure to be true to his pretensions.

9. But he that will undertake so Heroick an enterprize, must qualifie himself for it, by being true to his own pretensions. He must leave no uneven thread in his loom, or by indulging to any one sort of reprovable discourse himself, defeat all his endeavours against the rest. Those aery Speculators that have writ of the Philosophers Stone, have required many Personal qualifications, strict abstinences and purities in those who make the experiment. The thing may have this sober application, that those who would turn this Iron Age into Gold, that would convert our rusty drossy Converse into a purer Strain, must be perfectly clean themselves. For alas what effect can that man hope from his most zealous reprehensions, who lays himself open to recrimination? He that hears a man bitterly inveigh against Blasphemy and profaness, and yet (in that almost the same breath) hears his monitor inveigh as bitterly against his Neighbour, will scarce think him a good guide of his Tongue, that has but half the mastery of his own. Let every man therefore be sure to begin at the right end of his work, to wash his own mouth clean, before he prescribe Gargarisms to others. And to that purpose let him impartially reflect on all the undue liberties he has given his Tongue, whether those which have been here remarked, or those others which he may find in all Practical books, especially in (the most Practial of all books) his own Conscience. And when he has trac'd his talk through all its wild rambles, let him bring home his stray; not like the lost sheep with joy, but with tears of penitence and contrition, and keep a strict watch over it that it break not loose again; nay farther require it to make some restitution for the trespass it has committed in its former excursions, to restore

to

to God what it has robb'd of his Honour, by devoting it ſelf an inſtrument of his ſervice; to his Neighbour what it has detracted from him, by wiping off that ſullage it has caſt upon his Fame; and to himſelf by defacing thoſe ill Characters of vanity and folly it has imprinted on him. Thus may the Tongue cure its own ſting, and by a kind of Sympathetick vertue, the wound may be healed by dreſſing the weapon. But alas when we have done all, the Tongue is ſo ſlippery that it will often be in danger to deceive our watch: nay it has a ſecret intelligence with the heart, which like a corrupted Goaler is too apt to connive at its eſcape. Let us therefore ſtrengthen our guards, call in him who ſees all the ſecret practices of our treacherous hearts, and commit both them and our tongues to his cuſtody. Let us ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *Try me, O Lord, and ſeek the ground of my heart, Pſal.* 129. 23. And with him again, *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips, O let not my heart be inclined to any evil thing, Pſal.* 141. 3. And if *hand thus joyn in hand, Prov.* 16. 5. if God's grace be humbly invoked, and our own endeavour honeſtly employed, even this *unruly evil* of the Tongue (as St. *James* calls it Chap. 3. 8.) may be in ſome degree tamed. If now and then it get a little out by ſtealth, yet it will not like the Demoniack be ſo raving, as quite to break all its chains. If we cannot always ſecure our ſelves from inadvertence and ſurprize, but that a forbidden word may ſometimes eſcape us, yet we may from deliberate wilful offences of the Tongue. And though we ſhould all aſpire higher, yet if we can but reach this, we ought not to excuſe our ſelves (upon remaining infirmities) from the Chriſtian generous undertaking, I was recommending, the reforming of others. Indeed I had made a very impertinent exhortation to that, if this degree of fitneſs may not be admitted; for I fear there would be none on earth could attempt it upon other terms: the world muſt ſtill remain as it is, and await only the Tongues of Angels to reduce it. Nor need we fear that cenſure of Hypocriſy which we find, *Matth.* 7. 5. for the caſe is very differing. 'Tis indeed as ridiculous as inſolent an attempt, for one that has a Beam in his own eye, to pretend to caſt a Mote out of his Brothers: but it holds not on the contrary, that he that has a Mote in his own, ſhould not endeavour to remove the Beam in his Brothers. Every ſpeck do's not blind a man, nor do's every infirmity make one unable to diſcern, or incompetent to reprove the groſſer faults of others.

The man of vertue, if he do not reform others, will not loſe his pains ſince he will ſave himſelf.

10. Yet after all let us as much as is poſſible clear our eyes even of this mote, and make our Copy as worth tranſcribing as we can: for certainly the beſt inſtrument of reformation is example: and though admonition may ſometimes be neceſſary, yet there are many circumſtances required to the right ordering of that, ſo that it cannot always be practicable, but a good example ever is. Beſides it has a ſecret magnetick vertue, like the Loadſtone it attracts by a power of which we can give no account: ſo that it ſeems to be one of thoſe occult qualities, thoſe ſecrets in nature, which have puzzled the inquirers, only experience demonſtrates it to us. I am ſure it do's (too abundantly) in ill examples, and I doubt not might do the like in good, if they were as plentiful experimented. And that they may be ſo, let every man be ambitious to caſt in his mite: for though two make but a farthing, yet they may be multiplied to the vaſteſt ſum. However if a man cannot reform others, yet I am ſure 'twill be worth his while, ſo to *ſave himſelf from this untoward generation, Acts* 2. 40. I have now preſented the Tongue under a double aſpect, ſuch as may juſtify the ancient Definition of it, that it is the worſt and beſt part of man, the beſt in its original and deſign, and the worſt in its corruption and degeneration. In *David* the man after Gods heart it was his *glory, Pſal.* 57. 8. *'The beſt member that he had, Pſal.* 108. 1. *But in the wicked it cuts like a ſharp Razor, Pſal.* 52. 2. *'Tis as the venom of Aſps, Pſal.* 140. 3. The Tongues from heaven were *Cloven, Acts* 2. 2. to be the more diffuſive of good: but thoſe that are *fired from hell* are forked, *Jam.* 3. 6. to be the more impreſſive of miſchief: it muſt be referred to every mans choice, into which of the forms he will mould his. *Solomon* tells us, *Death and Life are in the power of the Tongue,* and that not only directly in regard of the good or ill we may do to others, but reflectively alſo, in reſpect of what may rebound to our ſelves. Let *Moſes* then make the inference from *Solomon*'s premiſes, *Therefore chuſe life, Deut.* 30. 15. a propoſal ſo reaſonable, ſo agreeable to nature, that no flouriſhes can render it more inviting. I ſhall therefore leave it to the Readers contemplation, and ſhall hope that if he pleaſe but to revolve it with that ſeriouſneſs which the importance exacts, he will new ſet his Tongue, compoſe it to thoſe pious Divine ſtrains, which may be a proper preludium to thoſe Allelujahs he hopes eternally to ſing.

FINIS.

THE ART OF CONTENTMENT.

THE PREFACE.

THE desire of Happiness is so coessential with our nature, so interwoven and incorporate with it; that nothing but the dissolution of the whole frame can extinguish it. This runs through the whole race of mankind, and amidst the infinite variety of other inclinations, preserves it self entire. The most various contradictory tempers do yet conspire in this, and men of the most unequal fortunes, are yet equal in their wishes of being Happy.

The desire of happiness is the first and most universal impression upon nature.

But this concurrence as to the end is not more universal than the disagreement about the way. Every man would have happiness, but wherein that consists, or how it is to be attain'd, has been diversly opin'd. Indeed the ultimate supreme happiness as it is originally inherent in God, so it is wrap'd up in those clouds and darkness, which as the Psalmist says, are round about him, *Psal. 18. 11. And we can see nothing of it, but in those gleams and rays he is pleas'd to dart out upon us: so that all our estimates as to our final felicity, must be measur'd by those revelations he has made of it.*

This concurrence in the end is not more universal than the disagreement about the way.

But one would think our temporal happiness were as much a mystery as our eternal, to see what variety of blind pursuits are made after it. One man thinks 'tis seated on the top pinnacle of honour, and climbs till perhaps he falls head-long. Another thinks it a mineral, that must be dig'd out of the earth, and toils to lade himself with thick clay, *Hab. 2. 9. and at last finds a grave, where he sought his treasure. A third supposes it consists in the variety of pleasures, and wearies himself in that pursuit, which only cloies and disappoints. Yet every one of these can read you lectures of the gross mistake and folly of the other, whilst himself is equally deluded.*

Even temporal happiness seems to be a mystery.

Thus do men chase an imaginary good, till they meet with real evils; herein exposing themselves to the same cheat Laban *put upon* Jacob, *they serve for* Rachel, *and are rewarded with* Leah, *court fancied beauty, and marry loath'd deformity. Such delusive felicities as these are the largesses of the Prince of the Air, who once attempted to have enveigled* even Christ himself, *Matt. 4.*

The pursuit of imaginary goods, is answered by disappointment.

But God's proposals are more sincere: he knows how sandy, how false a foundation all these external things must make, and therefore warns us not build so much as our present satisfaction upon them, but shews us a more certain, a more compendious way to acquire what we gasp after, by telling us that as Godliness in respect of the next, so Contentment *for this world* is great gain, *1 Tim. 6. 6. It is indeed the* Unum necessarium, *the one point in which all the lines of worldly happiness are concentred, and to compleat its excellence, 'tis to be had at home: nay indeed only there. We need not ramble in wild pursuits after it, we may form it within our own breasts: no man wants materials for it, that knows but how to put them together.*

Almighty God proposes a short and easy method for the attaining happiness, the being contented.

And the directing to that skill is the only design of the ensuing Tract, which coming upon so kind an errand, may at least hope for an unprejudic'd reception. Contentment is a thing we all profess to aspire to, and therefore it cannot be thought an unfriendly office to endeavour to conduct men to it. How far the ensuing considerations may tend to that end, I must leave to the judgment, and experience of the Reader, only desiring him that he will weigh them with that seriousness which befits a thing wherein both his happiness and duty are concern'd: for in this (as in many other instances) God has so twisted them together, that we cannot be innocently miserable. The present infelicities of our murmurs and impatiences, have an appendant guilt, which will consign us to a more irreversible state of dissatisfaction hereafter.

The directing to this skill is the design of the ensuing Tract.

THE

CONTENTS.

THE

THE
Art of Contentment.

Sect. I.

Of the necessary Connexion between Happiness and Contentment.

Gods design in the creation, was not to receive accession to his own happiness, but communicate it to others.

1. GOD who is essentially Happy in himself, can receive no accession to his Felicity by the poor contributions of men. He cannot therefore be suppos'd to have made them upon intuition of increasing, but communicating his Happiness. And this his original design is very visible in all the parts of his œconomy towards them. When lapsed man had counterplotted against himself, defeated the purpose of the Divine goodness, and plung'd his whole nature into the opposite state of endless misery; he yet reinforc'd his first design, and an expedient as full of wonder as mercy, the death of his Son, recovers him to his former capacity of bliss. And that it might not only be a bare capacity, he has added all other methods proper to work upon a rational creature. He has shewed him his danger, set before him in perspective that eternal Tophet, which he is advis'd to shun. On the other side he has no less lively describ'd the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the Celestial Country to which he is to aspire: nay farther has level'd his road to it, leads him not as he did the Israelites through the wilderness, through intricate mazes, to puzzle his understanding; through *a land of drought, wherein were fiery Serpents and Scorpions*, Deut. 8. 15. to discourage and affright him: but has in the Gospel chalk'd out a plain, a safe, nay a pleasant path; as much superiour both in the ease of the way, and in the end to which it leads, as Heaven is to Canaan.

The securing this happiness to men is the business of Christian religion.

2. By doing this he has not only secured our grand and ultimate Happiness, but provided for our intermedial also. Those Christian duties which are to carry us to heaven, are our refreshments, our viaticum in our journey: his yoke is not to gall and fret us, but an engine by which we may with ease (and almost insensibly) draw all the clogs and incumbrances of human life. For whether we take Christianity in its whole complex, or in its several and distinct branches, 'tis certainly the most excellent, the most compendious art of happy living: its very tasks are rewards, and its preceps are nothing but a divine sort of Alchymy, to sublime at once our nature and our pleasures.

And most particularly exprest in the precept of acquiescence and Contentment.

3. This may be evidenc'd in every particular of the Evangelical law: but having formerly made some attempt towards it in another * Tract, I shall not here reassume the whole subject. I shall only single out one particular precept, wherein Happiness is not (as in the others) only implied, and must be catcht at the rebound by consequence and event; but is literally exprest, and is the very matter of the duty; I mean the precept of acquiescence and *Contentment*, Happiness and this true genuine Contentment, being terms so convertible, that to bid us be content, is but another phrase for bidding us be happy.

* *Decay of Christian Piety.*

Temporal enjoyments are justly discarded by heathen philosophy, which lodges felicity in the practice of vertue.

4. Temporal enjoyments, such as are pleasure, wealth, honour, and the rest, though they make specious pretences to be the measure of human Happiness, are all of them justly discarded by the Philosopher in his Ethicks, upon this one consideration, that coming from abroad they may be with-held or taken from us: and our tenure being precarious, we even for that reason are unhappy in our most desiderable possessions, because we are still liable to be so. And therefore he concludes, that felicity must be placed in the mind and soul, which stands without the reach of fortune; and in the practice of vertue, which in its own nature, and not

in its contingent uſe is truly good, and therefore certainly renders the poſſeſſors ſuch.

A compendium whereof is the before-mention'd duty of contentment.

5. But this practice being diffuſed through the whole extent of Moral duty *Epictetus* thought he had deſerved well of human nature, when he drew it up in two ſhort words, to *ſuſtain* and *abſtain*: that is, to bear with conſtancy adverſe events, and with moderation enjoy thoſe that are proſperous. Which complexure of Philoſophy is yet more fully, as well as more compendiouſly expreſt in the ſingle notion of *Contentment*: which involves the patient bearing of all miſadventures, and generous contempt of ſenſual illectives. This ſtate of mind the Greeks by calling it *αὐτάρκεια* or ſelf-ſufficiency, which, we know properly ſpeaking, is one of the incommunicable attributes of the Divine nature: and the Stoicks expreſly pretend, that by it mortal men are enabled to rival their God; in *Seneca*'s phraſe to make a controverſy with *Jupiter* himſelf. But abating the inſolent blaſphemy of an independent felicity, Chriſtianity acknowledges a material truth in the aſſertion: and St. *Paul* declares of himſelf, that having *learn'd how to want and how to abound, and in whatever ſtate he happens to be in, therewith to be content*: *he is able to do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengthens him*, Phil. 4. 11, 12, 13. *and having nothing, to poſſeſs all things*, 1 Cor. 6. 10.

The contented perſon though he has nothing, poſſeſſes all things.

6. Which great event comes about, not only becauſe all good things are eminently in the Divine nature, and he who by vertue and Religion poſſeſſes Him, thereby in a full equivalence has every thing; but alſo upon human meaſures, and the principles of Philoſophy: the compendious addreſs to wealth, as *Plato* rightly obſerv'd, being not to encreaſe poſſeſſions, but leſſen deſires. And if ſo, 'twill follow that the contented man muſt be abundantly provided for, being ſo entirely ſatisfied with what he has, as to have no deſires at all. Indeed 'tis truly ſaid of covetous men, and is equally verified of all who have any deſire to gratify, that they want no leſs what they have, than what they have not: but the reverſe of that Paradox is really made good by *Contentment*, which beſtows on men the enjoyment of whatever they have, and alſo whatever they have not: and by teaching to want nothing, abundantly ſecures not to want Happineſs.

Without this no ſucceſs or affluence can make happy.

7. On the other ſide this one grace being abſent, it is not in the power of any ſucceſs or affluence to make life a tolerable thing. Let all the materials of earthly Happineſs be amaſt together, and flung upon one man, they will without Contentment be but like the fatal prize of *Tarpeia*'s treaſon, who was preſt to death with the weighty of her booty. He that has the elements of felicity, and yet cannot form them into a ſatisfaction, is more deſperately miſerable than he that wants them: for he who wants has yet ſomething to hope for, and thinks if he had them he might be happy; but he who inſignificantly poſſeſſes them, has no reſerve, has not ſo much as the Flattery of an expectation: for he has nothing left to deſire, and yet can be as little ſaid to enjoy.

Outward goods are the earthy part and droſs of happineſs; content is the ſpirit.

8. He therefore that would have the extract, the quinteſſence of Happineſs, muſt ſeek it in Content. All outward acceſſions are but the droſs and earthy part; this alone is the ſpirit, which when 'tis once ſeparated, depends not upon the fate of the other; but preſerves its vigour when that is deſtroy'd. St. *Paul* whom I before-mention'd, is a ready inſtance of it, who profeſſes to be *content in whatever ſtate*; Contentment being not ſo inſeparately link'd to external things, but that they may ſubſiſt apart. That thoſe are often without it we are too ſure, and that it may be without them is as certainly true; though by our own default we have not ſo many examples of it. A heart that rightly computes the difference between temporals and eternals, may reſolve with the Prophet, *Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be on the vines, the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield not meat, the flocks ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herds in the ſtall; yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation*, Hab. 3. 17, 18. He that has God, need not much deplore the want of any thing elſe: nor can he that conſiders the plenty and glory of his future ſtate, be much dejected with the want or the abjectneſs of his preſent.

Both the one and other are indulg'd by God in this world.

9. Yet ſo indulgent is God to our infirmities, that knowing how unapt our impatient natures are to *walk only by faith, and not at all by ſight*, 2 Cor. 5. 7. he is pleaſed to give us fair antepaſts of ſatisfaction here, diſpenſes his temporal Bleſſings though not equally, yet ſo univerſally, that he that has leaſt, has enough to oblige not only his acquieſcence, but his thankfulneſs. Though every man has not all he wiſhes, yet he has that which is more valuable than that he complains to want; nay which he himſelf could worſe ſpare, were it put to his option.

10. And

All men are so much beyond their merit provided for; that 'tis a wonder any should be discontent.

10. And now from such a dispofure of things who would not expect that mankind should be the chearfullest part of the creation: that the *sun should* not more *rejoyce to run his course*, Psal 19. 5. than man should to finish his: that a journey which has so blessed an end, and such good accommodation by the way, should be past with all imaginable alacrity, and that we should live here practicers and learners of that state of unmix'd interminable joys to which we aspire. But alas if we look upon the universality of men, we shall find it nothing so; but while all other creatures gladsomely follow the order of their creation, take pleasure in those things God has assign'd for them, we with sullen perverseness quarrel at what we should enjoy, and in every thing make it our business, not to fit it for our use, but to find some concealed quality which may render it unfit. We look insidiously upon our blessings, like men that design'd only to pick a quarrel, and start a pretence for mutinying. From hence it is that man who was design'd the Lord of the World, to whose satisfactions all inferiour beings were to contribute, is now the unhappiest of the creatures: nay as if the whole order of the universe were inverted, he becomes slave to his own vassals, courts all those sublunary things with such passion, that if they prove coy and fly his embraces, he is mad and desperate: if they fling themselves into his Arms, he is then glutted and satiated; like *Amnon he hates more than he loved*, 2 Sam. 13. 15. and is sicker of his possession, than he was of his desire.

The entertaining irregular desires, makes our satisfaction impossible.

11. And thus will it ever be till we keep our desires more at home, and not suffer them to ramble after things without our reach. That honest Roman, who from his extraordinary industry upon his little spot of ground received such an increase, as brought him under suspicion of witchcraft, is a good example for us. God has plac'd none of us in so barren a soil, in so forlorn a state, but there is something in it which may afford us comfort; let us husband that to the utmost, and 'tis scarce imaginable what improvements even he that appears the most miserable may make of his condition. But if in a sullen humor we will not cultivate our own field, because we have perhaps more mind to our neighbours, we may thank our selves if we starve. The despising of what God has already given us, is sure but a cold invitation to farther bounty. Men are indeed forced sometimes to reward the mutinous: but God is not be so attacked, nor is it that sort of violence which can ever force Heaven. The Heathen could say that *Jupiter* sent his plagues among the poorer sort of men, because they were always repining: and indeed there is so much truth in the observation, that our impatience and discontent at our present condition, is the greatest provocation to God to make it worse.

This is equally repugnant to interest and duty.

12. It must therefore be resolv'd to be very contrary to our Interest, and surely 'tis no less to our Duty. It is so if we do but own our selves men, for in that is imploy'd a subordination and submission to that power that made us so; and to dispute his managery of the world, to make other distributions of it than he has done, is to renounce our subjection, and set up for dominion. But this is yet more intolerable as we are Christians, it being a special part of Evangelical discipline, chearfully to conform to any condition: to *know how to be abased, and how to abound, to be full and to be hungry*, Phil. 4. 12. *to be careful for nothing*, ver. 6. Nay so little do's Christ give countenance to our peevish discontents, our wanton outcries when we are not hurt, that he requires more than a Contentment, an exultancy and transport of joy even under the heaviest pressures, under reproaches and persecutions. *Rejoyce ye in that day, and leap for joy*, Luke 6. 23. And sure nothing can be more contrary to this, than to be always whining and complaining, crying in the Prophets phrase, *my leaness, my leaness, wo is me*, Isai. 24. 16. when perhaps *Moses*'s simile do's better fit our state, *Jesurun waxed fat, and kicked*, Deut. 32. 15.

And also our ease.

13. And as this querulous humor is against our interest and duty, so it is visibly against our ease. 'Tis a sickness of the mind, a perpetual gnawing and craving of the appetite without any possibility of satisfaction: and indeed is the same in the heart which the *Caninus appetitus* is in the stomach; to which we may aptly enough apply that description we find in the Prophet, *he shall snatch on the right hand and be hungry, and he shall eat on the left and not be satisfied*, Isai. 9. 20. Where this sharp, this fretting humor abounds, nothing converts into nourishment: every new accession do's but excite some new desire; and as 'tis observ'd of a trencher-fed dog, that he tasts not one bit for the greedy expectation of the next, so a discontented mind is so intent upon his pursuits, that he has no relish of his acquests. So that what the Prophet speaks of the Covetous, is equally appliable to all other sorts of Male-contents: *he enlarges his desires as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied*, Hab. 2. 5. And sure if the *desire accomplished* be as *Solomon* says *sweet to the soul*,

Prov. 13. 19. it muſt be exceeding bitter, to be thus condemned to endleſs unaccompliſhable deſires; and yet this is the torture which every repining uncontented ſpirit provides for its ſelf.

In ſo ſenſual an age as this we live in, one would expect what is uneaſy ſhould be avoided.

14. What a madneſs is it then for men to be ſo deſperately bent againſt their intereſt and duty, as to renounce even their eaſe too for company? One would think this age were ſenſual enough to be at defiance with the leaſt ſhadow of uneaſineſs. It is ſo I am ſure where it ought not: every thing is laborious when 'tis in compliance with their duty; a few minutes ſpent in prayer, *Oh what a wearineſs is it!* Mal. 2. 19. If they chance but to miſs a meal, they are ready to cry out, their *knees are weak through faſting*, Pſal. 109. 3. yet they can without regret, or any ſelf-compaſſion, macerate and cruciate themſelves with anxious cares and vexations, and, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 *Tim.* 6. 10. *pierce themſelves through with many ſorrows.* That propoſal therefore which was very raſhly made by St. *Peter* to our Saviour, *Maſter pity thy ſelf*, Mat. 16. 22. which we render *be it far from thee*, would here be an adviſed motion to the generality of mankind, who are commonly made unhappy not by any thing without them, but by thoſe reſtleſs impatiencies that are within them.

The whole affair will be uſefully brought to rational conſideration,

15. It may therefore be a ſeaſonable office to endeavour the appeaſing theſe ſtorms, by recalling them to thoſe ſober rational conſiderations, which may ſhew as well the folly, as uneaſineſs of this repining unſatisfiable humor. 'Tis certain that in true reaſoning, we can find nothing whereon to found it, but a great deal to enforce the contrary. Indeed 'tis ſo much againſt the dictate of reaſonable nature to affect damage, ſin, and torment, that were there nothing elſe to be ſaid but what I have already mention'd, it might competently diſcover the great unreaſonableneſs of this ſin.

And reduced to ſeven diſtinct heads.

16. But we need not confine our appeal to reaſon, as it is only a judge of utility and advantage; but enlarge it to another notion, as it is judge of equity and right: in which reſpect alſo it gives as clear and peremptory a ſentence againſt all murmuring and impatience. To evince this I ſhall inſiſt upon theſe particulars. 1. That God is debtor to no man, and therefore what ever he affords to any, it is upon bounty, not of right, a benevolence not a due. 2. That this bounty is not ſtreight or narrow, confin'd to ſome few particular perſons, and wholly overskipping the reſt, but more or leſs univerſally diffuſed to all. So that he who has the leaſt, cannot juſtly ſay but he has been liberally dealt with. 3. That if we compare our bleſſings with our allays, our good things with our evil, we ſhall find our good far ſurmounting. 4. That we ſhall find them yet more ſo, if we compare them with the good we have done, as on the contrary we ſhall find our afflictions ſcarce diſcernable if ballanc'd with our ſins. 5. That as God is the Rector of the univerſe, ſo it appertains to him to make ſuch allotments, ſuch diſtributions, as may beſt preſerve the ſtate of the whole. 6. That God notwithſtanding that univerſal care, has alſo a peculiar aſpect on every particular perſon, and diſpoſes to him what he diſcerns beſt for him in ſpecial. 7. If we compare our adverſities with thoſe of other men, we ſhall always find ſomething that equals if not exceeds our own. All theſe are certain irrefragable truths, and there is none of them ſingle but may, if well preſt upon the mind, charm it into calmneſs and reſignation; but when there is ſuch a conſpiration of arguments, it muſt be a very obſtinate perverſneſs that can reſiſt them: or ſhould they fail to enforce a full conviction; will yet introduce thoſe ſubſidiary proofs, which I have to alledge, ſo advantageouſly, as will being put together amount unto perfect and uncontroulable Evidence.

SECT. II.

Of Gods Abſolute Soveraignty.

God is debtor to no man.

1. THE firſt propoſition that God is debtor to no man, is too clear and apparent to require much of illuſtration: for as he is a free agent and may act as he pleaſes, ſo he is the ſole Proprietary and can wrongfully detain from none, becauſe all original right is in himſelf. This has been ſo much acknowledg'd by the blindeſt Heathens, that none of them durſt make inſolent addreſſes to their Gods, challenge any thing of them as of debt, but

by

by sacrifices and prayers own'd their dependence and wants, and implor'd supplies. And sure Christianity teaches us not to be more saucy. If those Deities who ow'd their very being to their votaries, were yet acknowledg'd to be the spring and source of all, we can with no pretence deny it to that supream power in whom *we live and move, and have our being*, Acts 17. 28. For if it were meerly an act of his choice to give us a being, all his subsequent bounties can have no other original than his own good pleasure. We could put no obligation upon God before we were: and when we began to be, we were his creatures, and so by the most indisputable right owe our selves to him, but can have no antecedent title on which to claim any thing from him: so that the Apostle might well make the challenge which he doth on God's behalf, *who hath given any thing unto him, and it shall be recompens'd unto him again?* Rom. 11. 35.

Therefore no man can demand any thing from him.

2. Now ordinary discretion teaches us not to be too bold in our expectations from one to whom we can plead no right. It has as little of prudence as of modesty, to press impudently upon the bounty of a Patron, and do's but give him temptation (at least pretence) to deny. And if it be thus with men, who possibly may sometimes have an interest, sometimes a vanity to oblige us; it must much more be so towards God, who cannot be in want of us, and therefore need not buy us: *our good*, as the Psalmist speaks, *extends not to him*, Psal. 16. 2. He has a fundamental right in that little we are, which will stand good though it should never be corroborated by greater benefits. With what an humble bashfulness should we then sue for any thing, who have no argument to invite the least donation? being already so preingag'd, that we cannot mortgage so much as our selves in consideration of any new favour: and surely extravagant hopes do very ill befit people in this condition. We see the modesty of good *Mephibosheth*, who though he was by a slanderous accusation outed of half the estate *David* had given him, yet upon a reflection that he deriv'd it all from his good pleasure, disputed not the sentence, but chearfully resign'd the whole to the same disposure, from which he receiv'd it, saying, *Yea let him take all*, 1 Sam. 19. 30. A rare example and fit for imitation, as being adapted to the present case, not only in that one circumstance of his having receiv'd all from the King, but also in that of the attainder of his blood, which he confesses in the former part of the verse, for *all my fathers house were but dead men before my Lord*. And alas may we not say the very same? Was not our whole race tainted in our first parent? So that if God had not the primary title of vassalage, he would in our fall have acquir'd that of confiscation and escheat. And can we think our selves then in terms to capitulate and make our own conditions, and expect God should humor us in all our wild demands?

The doing so is defiance to God.

3. This is indeed to keep up that old rebellion of our Progenitor, for that consisted in a discontent with that portion God had assign'd him, and coveting what he had restrain'd him. Nay indeed it comes up to the height of the Devils proposal, the attempting *to be as God*, Gen. 3. 5. For 'tis an endeavour to wrest the managery out of his hands, to supersede his Authority of dispensing to us, and to carve for our selves. This is so mad an insolence, that were it possible to state a case exactly parallel between man and man, it would raise the indignation of any that but pretended to ingenuity. Yet this is, without Hyperbole, the true meaning of every murmuring repining thought we entertain.

Which though a great, is a general insolence and injustice.

4. But as bad as it is, who is there of us, that can in this particular say, *We have made our heart clean?* Prov. 20. 9. 'Tis true we make some formal acknowledgment sometimes that we receive all from Gods gift, custom teaches us from our infancy after every meal we eat to give him thanks (though even that is now thought too much respect, and begins to be discarded as unfashionable.) Yet sure he cannot be thought to do that in earnest, that has all the time of his eating been grumbling that his table abounds not with such delicacies as his neighbours. And yet at this rate God knows are most of our thanksgivings. Indeed we have not so much ordinary civility to God, as we have to men. The common proverb teaches us not too curiously to pry into the blemishes of what is given us: but on Gods gifts we sit as Censors, nicely examine every thing which is any way disagreeable to our fancies, and as if we dealt with him under the notion of chapmen, disparage it, as *Solomon* says buyers use to do, *it is naught, it is naught saith the buyer*, Prov. 20. 14. Nay we seem yet more absurdly to change the scene, and as if God were to make oblations to us, we as critically observe the defects of his benefactions, as the Levitical Priests were to do those of the sacrifice, and (like angry Deities) scornfully reject, what ever do's not perfectly answer our wanton appetites.

And a high provocation of God to withdraw what he has given.

5. And now should God take us at our words, withdraw all those blessings which we so fastidiously despise, what condition were we in? 'Tis sure we have nothing to plead in reverse of that judgment. There is nothing in it against justice: for he takes but his own. This he intimates to *Israel*, Hos. 2. 9. *I will return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax*: in which he asserts his own propriety, my corn, my wine, &c. and recalls them to the remembrance that they were but usufructuaries: and 'tis as evident that our tenure is but the same. Nay this proceeding would not be repugnant even to mercy, for even that is not oblig'd still to prostitute it self to our contempt. I am sure such a tolerance is beyond all the measures of human lenity. Should any of us offer an alms to an indigent wretch, and he when he sees 'tis Silver, should murmur and exclame that it is not Gold, would we not draw back our hand, and reserve our charity for a more worthy object? 'Tis true indeed God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor our narrow bowels equal measures for the divine compassions, and we experimentally find that his long-suffering infinitely exceeds ours: yet we know he do's in the parable of the Lord and the servant, *Matth.* 18. declare that he will proportion his mercy by ours in that instance; and we have no promise that he will not do it in this: nay we have all reason to expect that he should; for since his wisdom prompts him to do nothing in vain, and all his bounty to us is design'd to make us happy, when he sees that end utterly frustrated by our discontents, to what purpose should he continue that to us which we will be never the better for?

Tho' God Almighty be patient, yet he is not insensible.

6. Besides though he be exceedingly Patient, yet he is not Negligent or Insensible; he takes particular notice, not noly with what diligence we employ, but with what affections we resent every of his blessings. And as ingratitude is a vice odious to men, so it is extreamly provoking to God: so that in this sense also, the words of our Saviour are most true, *from him that hath not* (*i. e.*) that hath not a grateful sense and value, *shall be taken away even that he hath*, Matth. 25. 29. But we may find a threatning of this kind yet more express to *Israel*, *because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with gladness and with joyfulness of heart for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, whom the Lord God will send among thee, in hunger and in thirst and in nakedness and in want of all things*, Deut. 28. 27, 28. a sad and dismal inversion, yet founded wholly in the want of that chearful recognition which God expected from them. And if *Israel* the lot of his own inheritance, that people whom he had singled out from all the nations of the world, could thus forfeit his favour by unthankfulness, sure none of us can suppose we have any surer entail of it. In a word as God loves a chearful giver, so he also loves a chearful receiver: one that complies with his end in bestowing, by taking a just complacence in his gifts. But the querulous and unsatisfied, reproach his bounty: accuse him of illiberality and narrowness of mind. So that he seems even in his honour engag'd to bring them to a righter apprehension of him, and by a deprivation teach them the value of those good things, which they could not learn by the enjoyment.

If sense of duty cannot perswade against murmuring, consideration of interest should do it.

7. If therefore ingenuity and gratitude cannot, yet at least let prudence and self-love engage us against this sin of *Murmuring*, which we see do's abundantly justify the Character the Wise man gives when he tells us *'tis unprofitable*, Wisd. 1. 11. he might have said pernicions also, for so it evidently is in its effects. Let us then arm our selves against it, and to that purpose impress deeply upon our minds the present consideration, that God owes us nothing, and that what ever we receive is an alms, and not a tribute. *Diogenes* being asked what wine drank the most pleasant, answered, that which is drunk at anothers cost. And this circumstance we can never miss of to recommend our good things to us: for be they little or much, they come gratis. When therefore in a petish mood we find our selves apt to charge God foolishly, and to think him strait-handed towards us, let us imagine God expostulating with us, as the housholder in the parable, *Friend I do thee no wrong: is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own*? Matth. 20. 15. If God have not the right of disposing, let us find out those that have, and see how much better we shall speed: but if he hath, let us take heed of disputing with him. We that subsist meerly by his favour, had need court and cherish it by all the arts of humble observance. Every man is ready to say how ill beggary and pride do agree. The first qualification we cannot put off; O let us not provide it of the other so inconvenient, so odious an adjunct. Let us leave off prescribing to God (which no ingenuous man would do to an earthly benefactor) and let us betake our selves to a more holy and succesful policy, the acknowledgment of past mercies,

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and our own unworthiness. This was *Jacob*'s method, *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands*, and with this humble preface he introduces his petition for rescue in his present distress, *Deliver me I pray thee from the hand of my brother*, &c. Gen. 32. 10, 11. An excellent pattern of Divine Rhetorick, which the success demonstrates to have been very prevalent. And we cannot transcribe a better copy, to render our desires as succesful. Indeed we are so utterly destitute of all arguments from our selves, that we can make no reasonable form of address, if we found it not in something of God: and there is nothing even in him adapted to our purpose, but his mercy, nor can that be so advantageously urged by any thing, as by the former instances it has given of it self: for as God only is fit to be a precedent to himself, so he loves to be so. Thus we find, not only *Moses*, but God often recollecting his miraculous favours towards *Israel*, as an argument to do more: let us therefore accost him in his own way, and by a frequent and grateful recounting of his former mercies, engage him to future. Nor need we be at a loss for matter of such recollection, if we will but seriously consider what we have already received, which is the subject of the next Section.

Sect. III.

Of Gods Unlimited Bounty.

Ingratitude is the most criminal imputation which can be fixt upon a man.

IT is the known character of an unworthy Nature, to write injuries in Marble, and benefits in Dust: and however some (as *Seneca* well observes) may acquit themselves of this imputation as to man, yet scarce any do so in relation to God. 'Tis true indeed the charge must be a little varied; for God neither will nor can do us injury: yet we receive any thing that is adverse with such a resentment as if it were, and engrave that in our memories with indelible characters, whilst his great and real benefits are either not at all observ'd, or with so transient an advertence, that the comparison of dust is beyond our pitch, and we may be more properly said to write them in water. Nay so far are we from keeping records and registers of his favours, that even those standing and fixt ones which sense can prompt us to (without the aid of our memories) cannot obtain our notice.

All complaining is founded in this.

2. Were it not thus, it were impossible for men to be so perpetually in the complaining Key, as if their voices were capable of no other sound. One wants this, and another that, and a third something beyond them both, and so on *ad infinitum*; when all this while every one of them enjoys a multitude of good things without any remark. That very breath wherewith they utter their complaints, is a blessing, and a fundamental one too: for if God should withdraw that, they were incapable of whatsoever else they either have, or desire. 'Tis true that some mens impatiencies have risen so high, as to cast away life, because it was not clothed with all circumstances they wish'd. Yet these are rare instances, and do only shew such mens deprav'd judgment of things. A rich Jewel is not the less valuable, because a mad man in his raving fit flings it into the fire: but as to the generality of men, the devil (though a liar) gave a true account of their sense, when he said, *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life*, Job 2. 4. And though perhaps in an angry fit many men have with *Jonas*, Chap. 4. 3. *wish'd to die*, yet ten to one should death then come, they would be as willing to divert it, as was the man in the Apologue, who wearied with his burden of sticks, flung it down and call'd for death, but when he came, own'd no other occasion for him, but to be help'd up again with his bundle. I dare in this appeal to the experience of those, who have seem'd very weary of life, whether when any suddain danger has surprised them, it has not as suddainly altered their mind, and made them more desire life, than before they abhor'd it. 'Tis the common saying, As long as there is life there is hope: there is so as to secular concerns, for what strange revolutions do we often see in the age of a man? For what despicable beginnings have many arriv'd to the most splendid conditions? Of which we have divers modern as well as ancient instances. And indeed 'tis admirable to see what time and industry will (with Gods bles-

fing) effect. *But there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave*, Ecclef. 9. 10. we can improve no more when we are once tranfplanted thither.

And is the worst dispofal of time.

3. But this is yet much more confiderable in refpect of our fpiritual State. Our life is *the day wherein we are to work*, Joh. 9. 4. (yea to work our falvation:) but *when the night comes* (when death overtakes) *no man can work*. Now alas when 'tis confider'd how much of this day the moft of us have loiter'd away, how many of us have ftood idle till the fixth or ninth hour, it will be our concern not to have our day clofe before the eleventh. Nay alas 'tis yet worfe with us: we have not been idle, but very often ill bufied; fo that we have a great part of our time to unravel, and that is not to be done in a moment. For though our works may fitly enough be reprefented by the Prophets comparifon of a *fpiders web*, Ifa. 59. 5. yet they want the beft property even of that; they cannot be fo foon undone. Vices that are radicated by time and cuftom, lie too deep to be lightly fwept away. 'Tis no eafy thing to perfwade our felves to the will of parting with them. Many violences we muft offer to our felves, a long and ftrict courfe of mortification muft be gone through, e're we can find in our hearts to bid them be gone: and yet when we do fo, they are not fo tractable as the Centurions fervants. They will indeed come whenever we bid them, but they will fcarce go fo: they muft be expell'd by force and flow degrees; we muft fight for every inch of ground we gain from them: and as God would not affift the *Ifraelites* to fubdue the *Canaanites* at once, *Deut.* 7. 22 fo neither ordinarily do's he us to mafter perfectly our corruption. Now a procefs of this difficulty is not to be difpatch'd on a fuddain. And yet this is not all our task, for we have not only ill habits to extirpate, but we have alfo good ones to acquire: 'tis not a meer negative vertue will ferve our turns, nor will empty lamps enter us into the marriage chamber, *Mat.* 25. 10. *We muft add to our faith vertue, and to vertue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance*, &c. 2 Pet 1. 5. No link muft be wanting of that facred chain, but we muft (as the fame Apoftle advifes) *be holy in all manner of converfation*, 1 Pet. 1. 15.

If eternity be fecur'd, men may have leifure to regret the want of temporal goods but would be ftrangely unreafonable to complain, who had happily fecur'd that greateft intereft.

4. And now I would defire the Reader ferioufly to confider, whether he can upon good grounds tell himfelf that this fo difficult (and yet fo neceffary a work) is effectually wrought in him. If it be, he is a happy man, and can with no pretence complain of any external want: (he that is fed with *Manna*, muft be ftrangely perverfe if he murmur for a belly-full of *leeks and onions*, Num. 11. 5.) But on the contrary he owes infinite thanks to God, that has fpared him time for this important bufinefs, and did not put a period to his natural life, before he had begun a fpiritual. For I fear there are among the beft of us few of fo entire an innocence, but they may remember fome, either habits or acts of fin, in which it would have been dreadful for them to have been fnatch'd away. And then how comprehenfive, how prolifick a mercy has life been to them, when it has carried eternity in its womb, and their continuance on earth has qualified them for heaven? Neither are fuch perfons only to look on it as a bleffing in the retrofpect, as it relates to the paft, but alfo in the prefent and future: which if they continue to employ well, do's not only confirm, but advance their reward. Befides God may pleafe by them to glorify himfelf, make them inftrumental to his fervice; which as it is the greateft honour, fo it is alfo the greateft fatisfaction to a good heart. He fhews himfelf too mercenary that fo longs for his reward, as to grow impatient in his attendances: he that loves God, thinks himfelf bleft in the opportunity of doing work, as well as in receiving wages. Thus we fee how life is under all thefe afpects a mercy to a pious man, and fuch as not only obliges him to contentment, but gratitude.

If they cannot give this comfortable account of life, they ought not to complain, it being their fault: and the worfe their ftate is, the greater is the mercy of forbearance.

5. But fuppofing a man cannot give this comfortable account of his life, but is confcious, that he has fpent it to a very different purpofe, yet do's not that at all leffen his obligations to God, who meant he fhould have employ'd it better, and that he has not done fo is meerly his own fault. Nay indeed the worfe his eftate is, the greater mercy it is, that God has not yet made it irreverfible, that he has not cut him off at once from the earth and the poffibility of heaven too, but affords him yet a longer *day, if* yet *he will hear his voice*, Pfal. 95. 7. This long-fuffering is one of the moft tranfcendent acts of divine goodnefs, and therefore the Apoftle rightly ftiles it *the riches of his goodnefs and long-fuffering and forbearance*, Rom. 2. 4. and fo at laft we commonly acknowledge it, when we have worn it out, and can no longer receive advantage by it. What a value do's a gafping defpairing foul put upon a fmall parcel of that time, which before he knew not how faft enough to fquander? O that men would fet the fame eftimate on it before, and then certainly, as it would make them better husbands of it, fo it would alfo ren-

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der them more thankful for it, *accounting that the long-suffering of our Lord is Salvation*, 2 Pet. 3. 15.

6. Indeed did men but rightly compute the benefit of life upon this score, all secular encumbrances, and uneasinesses of it would be overwhelmed, and stand only as Cyphers in the account. What a shame is it then that we should spend our breath in sighs and out-cries? which if we would employ to those nobler ends for which 'twas given, would supersede our complaints, and make us confess we were well dealt with, that *our life* (though bare and stript of all outward accessaries) *is given us for a prey*, Jer. 45. 5. And indeed he that has yet the great work of life to do, can very ill spare time or sorrow to bestow upon the regretting any temporal distress, since his whole stock is little enough to bewail and repair his neglects of his eternal concerns. Were all our lives therefore destitute of all outward comfort, nay were they nothing but a scene of perpetual disasters, yet this one advantage of life would infinitely outweigh them all, and render our murmurings very inexcusable.

The benefit of life upon this score, that it affords the means of repentance, is inestimable.

7. But God has not put this to the utmost trial, has never plac'd any man in such a state of unmixt calamity, but that he still affords many and great allays: he finds it fit sometimes to defalk some of our outward comforts, and perhaps imbitter others, but he never takes all away. This must be acknowledg'd, if we do but consider how many things there are in which the whole race of mankind do in common partake. The four Elements, Fire and Water, Air and Earth, do not more make up every mans composition, than they supply his needs: the whole host of heaven, the Sun, Moon and Stars, *Moses* will tell us, are by *God divided to all Nations under the whole heaven*, Deut. 4. 19. Those resplendent bodies equally afford their light and influence to all. The Sun shines as bright on the poor Cottage, as on the most magnificent Palace; and the Stars have their benign Aspects, as well for him, that *is behind the mill*, as for *him that sitteth on the Throne*, Exod. 11. 5. Propriety (that great incendiary below) breeds no confusion in those celestial Orbs, but they are every mans treasure, yet no mans peculiar (as if they meant to teach us, that our love of appropriation *descends not from above*, Jam. 3. 15. is no heavenly quality.)

Life involves several great temporal mercies.

8. And as they make no distinction of the ranks and degrees of men, so neither do they of their vertues. Our Saviour tells us, God causes *his Sun to rise on the good and on the evil, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*, Matth. 5. 45. If now we descend lower to the sublunary creatures, they equally pay their homage to man, do not disdain the dominion of the poor, and submit to that of the rich, but shew as that their instinct extends to the whole nature. An horse draws the poor mans plough, as tamely as the Princes chariot, and the Beggars hungry Cur follows him with as much obsequiousness and affection as the pamper'd lap-dogs of the nicest Ladies. The sheep obey a poor mercenary shepherd as well as they did the Daughters of the wealthy *Laban*, Gen. 29. 9. or of *Jethro* a Prince, Exod. 2. 16. and as willingly yield their fleeces to clothe *Lazarus*, as to make purple for *Dives*. And as animals, so vegetables are as communicative of their qualities to one man as another. The corn nourishes, the fruits refresh, the flowers delight, the simples cure the poor man as well as the rich.

Which without restraint are given to all.

9. But I foresee it will be objected, that these natural privileges are insignificant, because they are evacuated by those positive laws which bound propriety, and that therefore though one man could use the creatures as well as another, yet every man has them not to use. I answer, that for some of the things I have mention'd, they are still in their native latitude, cannot be inclos d or monopliz'd. The most ravenous oppressor could never yet lock up the sun in his chest: *he that lays house to house, or land to land, till there be no place*, Esa. 58. cannot inclose the common air: and the like may be said of divers of the rest, so that there are some (and those no mean) blessings, which continue still the indefeisible right of mankind in general.

And of which there are some that cannot be enclos'd.

10. As for those other things which are liable to the restrictive terms of *meum* and *tuum*, 'tis not to be deny'd but there is vast difference in the dispensing them; as great as *Nathan*'s parable describes, when he speaks of the numerous flocks of the rich man, and the *single ewe lamb of the poor*, 2 Sam. 12. 2. yet there is scarce any so deplorably indigent, but that by one means or other, he has or may have the necessary supports of life. Perhaps they fall not into his lap by birthright and inheritance, yet they are acquirable by labour and industry, which is perhaps the better tenure. They cannot, it may be, arrive to *Sodoms fulness of bread*:

And those that admit of restriction by propriety, are yet acquirable by labour.

yet if they have not her *abundance of idleness*, Ezek. 16. 49. they commonly need not want that, which was the height of *Agur*'s wish, *food convenient*, Prov. 30. 8. 'Tis true indeed, if they will fold their hands in their bosom, if with *Solomon's sluggard, they will not plough by reason of the cold*, they must take his fate in the summer, as they have his ease in the winter, *they may beg in harvest, and have nothing*, Prov. 20. 4. but then 'tis visible they are the Authors of their own necessities. And indeed to men of such lazy careless natures, 'tis hard to say, what degree of Gods Bounty can keep them from want, since we often see the fairest fortunes dissipated as well by the supine neglignce, as the riotous prodigality of the owners. And therefore if men will be idle, they are not to accuse God, but themselves if they be indigent.

Even the most forlorn conditions of sickness and age, have suitable reliefs assign'd to them.

11. But then there is one case wherein men seem more inevitably expos'd; and that is when by age, sickness, or decrepitness, they are disabled from work; or when their family is too numerous for their work to maintain. And this indeed seems the most forlorn state of poverty: yet God has provided for them also, by assigning such persons to the care of the rich; nay he has put an extraordinary mark of favour on them, given them the honour of being his proxies and representatives, made them letters of Attorny (as it were) to demand relief in his Name, and upon his account. And though 'tis too true, that even that Authority will not prevail with many of the rich to open their purses, yet even in this Age of frozen charity, there are still some who remember upon what terms they received their wealth, and employ it accordingly. And though the number of them is not so great as were to be wish'd, yet there are in all parts some scattered here and there, like *Cities of refuge* in the Land, *Deut.* 19. 2. to which these poor distressed creatures may flee for succour. And I think I may say, that between the legal provisions that are made in this case and voluntary contributions, there are not very many that want the things that are of absolute necessity: and we know St. *Paul* comprizes those in a small compass, *food and raiment*, and proposes them as sufficient materials of Content, 1 *Tim.* 6. 8. I say not this to contract any mans bowels, or lessen his compassions to such poor wretches. For how much soever they lend, I wish as *Joab* did in another case to *David*, the Lord *increase it an hundred fold*, 2 Sam. 24. 3. I only urge it as an evidence of the assertion I am to prove, that no man is so pretermitted by God or his disposal of temporals, but that even he that seems the most abandon'd has a share in his providence, and consequently cannot justly murmur, since even this state which is the highest instance of human indigence, is not without its receits from God.

The number of utterly forlorn persons is very small.

12. But the number in this form are but few, compar'd to those in higher: for between this and the highest affluence, how many intermedial degrees are there, in which men partake not only of the necessaries, but comforts of life; that have not only food and raiment, but their distinction of holy-day and working-day fare and apparel? He that is but one step advanced from beggary has so much, he that has got to a second has more than is necessary: and so every degree rises in plenty till it comes to vanity and excess. And even there too there are gradual risings, some having so much fewel for luxury, that they are at as great a loss for invention, as others can be for materials, and complain that there are no farther riots left for them to essay. How many are there who have so cloy'd and glutted their senses, that they want some other inlets for pleasure, and with the rich man in the Gospel, are in distress where to bestow their abundance?

That destitution is not the ground of discontent is manifest for that they most repine who have the greatest affluence.

13. And sure such as these cannot deny that they have received good things, yet generally there are none less contented; which is a clear demonstration, that our repinings proceed not from any defect of Bounty in God, but from the malignant temper of our own hearts. And as it is an easier thing to satisfy the cravings of an hungry, than to cure the nauseous recoilings of a surfeited stomach; so certainly the discontents of the poor, are much easier allay'd than those of the rich: the indigence of the one has contracted his desires, and has taught him not to look farther than a little beyond bare necessaries, so that a moderate Alms satisfies, and a liberal transports him: but he who by a perpetual repletion has his desires stretch'd and extended, is capable of no such satisfaction: when his enjoyments forestall all particular pursuits, and he knows not upon what to fasten his next wish; yet even then he has some confus'd unform'd appetites, and thinks himself miserable, because he cannot tell what would make him more happy. And yet this is that envy'd state which men with so much greediness aspire to: every man looks on it as the top of Felicity to have nothing more to wish in the world. And

yet

yet alas even that when attain'd, would be their torment. Let men never think then that Contentment is to be caught by long and forreign chases; he is likeliest to find it who sits at home, and duly contemplates those blessings which God has brought within his reach, of which every man has a fair proportion, if he will advert to it.

14. For besides these external accessions (of which the meanest have some, the middle sort a great deal, and the uppermost rather too much) man is a principality within himself, and has in his composure so many excellent impresses of his Makers power and goodness, that he need not ask leave of any exterior thing to be happy, if he know but aright how to value himself. The very meanest part of him, his body is a piece of admirable workmanship, of a most incomprehensible contrivance, as the Psalmist says, *He is fearfully and wonderfully made*; and 'tis astonishing to think of what a symmetry of parts this beautiful fabrick is made up. Nor are they only for shew, but use: every member, every limb is endowed with a particular faculty to render it serviceable to the whole; and so admirable is the contexture of veins and arteries, sinews and muscles, nerves and tendons, that none are superfluous, but some way or other contribute to vegetation, sense, or motion. Nay the most noble and most useful parts are all of them double, not only as a reserve in case of misadventure of one part; but also as an instance of the bounty of the Donor. And indeed it is observable of *Galen* in his writings, that after he had taken great care to exempt himself and all of his profession from taking notice of the Deity, by saying that to discourse concerning the Gods, was the task of speculative Philosophers; yet coming to write *De usu partium*, and considering the frame of human bodies, and therein discovering the wonderful contrivance of every part in reference to its self, and also to the whole; their strength, agility, and various movement, infinitely surpassing the powers of all Mechanick engines; he seems to have had the fate we read of *Saul* in holy Scripture, and against his genius and purpose to become a Prophet; breaking frequently out into Hymns and sacred raptures; saying, these Mysteries are more divine than the *Samothracian* or *Eleusinian*; and confessing they both strictly require and infinitely excel the low returns of human praise. But beyond the fabrick of parts as organick, what an extract of wonder are our senses, those *five operations of the Lord*, as the son of *Syrach* rightly (and by way of eminence) stiles them, *Ecclus* 17. 5? By these we draw all outward objects to our selves. What were the beauties of the universe to us, if we had not sight to behold them, or the most melodious sounds, if we had not hearing? and so of the rest. And yet these are not only generally given, but also preserv'd to the greater part of men; and perhaps would be to more, did not our base undervaluing of common mercies, force God sometimes to instruct us in their worth, by making us feel what it is to want them.

Every man is a principality within himself.

15. Multitudes of refreshments also God has provided for our bodies, particularly that of sleep, of which he has been so considerate, as in his distributions of time, to make a solemn allotment for it: yet who almost when he lies down considers the mercy, or when he rises refresh'd, rises thankful also? But if our rest at any time be interrupted by the cares of our mind, or pains of our bodies, then, (and not till then) we consider, that 'tis *God who gives his beloved sleep*, Psal. 127. 2. and think it a blessing worth our esteem. Thus it is with health, strength, and every thing else, we despise it whilst we have it, and impatiently desire it whilst we have it not: but in the interim sure we cannot complain, that Gods hand is shortned towards us, when in the ordinary course of his providence we commonly enjoy these mercies many years, which we find so much miss of, if they be withdrawn but for a few hours. And indeed there is not a greater instance of human pravity than our senseless contempt of blessings, meerly because they are customary; which in true reason is an argument why we should prize them the more. When we deal with men, we discern it well enough: he that gives me once a hundred pounds, I account not so much my benefactor, as if he made it my annual revenue: yet God must lose his thanks, by multiplying his favours; and his benefits grow more invisible by their being always before us.

The refreshment of these is a mercy of great value.

16. But the body (with its enjoyments) is but the lowest instance of Gods bounty: 'tis but a decent case for that inestimable Jewel he has put in it: the soul, like the Ark, is the thing for which this whole tabernacle was framed, and that is a spark of Divinity in which alone it is that God accomplished his design of *making man in his own image*, Gen. 1. 26. 'Twould be too long to attempt an exact survey of its particular excellencies; the meer intellectual powers wherewith it is indued, have

Our intellectual powers are infinitely more valuable, than those of the body.

exercised the curiosity and raised the admiration of the great contemplators of nature in all ages: yet after all, of so subtile composure is the soul, that it is inscrutable even to it self: and though the simplest man knows he has the faculties of Imagination, Apprehension, Memory Reflecting; yet the learnedest cannot assign where they are seated, or by what means they operate. 'Tis enough to us that we have them, and many excellent uses for them; one whereof (and a most necessary one) is a thankful reflection on the goodness of God who gave them. He might have made us in the very lowest form of creatures, insensible as stocks or stones; or if he had advanc'd us a step higher, he might have fixt us among meer animals, transcripts perhaps of the noxious, at the best of the tamer sort of beasts: but he has plac'd us in the highest rank of visible creatures, and not only given *Dominion over the works of his hand*, Psal. 8. 6. but has given us the use of reason wherewith to manage that soveraignity, without which we had only been the more masterful sort of brutes.

Yet the soul it self is a higher donation.

17. Yet still the soul is to be consider'd in a higher notion, that of its immortality and capacity of endless bliss. And here indeed it owns its extraction, and is an image of the first being, whose felicity is coexistent with himself. This as it is the most transcendent accomplishment of our nature, so it is most universal. Whatever disparity there may be between man and man in other respects, yet in this all are equal: the poor beggar at the gate has a soul as capacious of eternal happiness, as he whose *crumbs* he begs for (nay sometimes better prepar'd for it, as that parable shews, *Luke* 16. 21.) And though the dignities of Earth are the prize of the rich and noble, the subtle and designing; yet Heaven is as easily mounted from the dung-hill as the throne, and an honest simplicity will sooner bring us thither, than all the Machiavelian policy. Nay God has not only design'd us to so glorious an end, but has done all on his part to secure us of it, sent his Son to lead us the way, his Spirit to quicken us in it. We need not dispute how universal this is, 'tis sure it concerns all to whom I am now speaking, those that are within the pale of the Church: and if it should prove only confin'd to them, the more peculiar is their obligation, that are thus singled out from the rest of the world, and the greater ought to be their thankfulness. The heathen Philosopher made it matter of his solemn acknowledgment to fortune, that he was born a Grecian and not a Barbarian: and sure the advantages of our Christianity are of a much higher strain, and ought to be infinitely more celebrated. The Apostle we find often applauding this glorious privilege, as that which makes us *fellow citizens with the Saints, and of the houshold of God*, Eph. 3. 19. nay which elevates us to a higher state, *the adoption of Sons*, Gal. 4. 5. not only Sons, but *Heirs also of God, and joynt-heirs with Christ*, Rom. 8. 17. And what ambition is there so greedy which this will not satisfy? yet this is our common state, the birth-right of our generation, if we do not degrade our selves, and with *Esau* basely sell our title.

'Tis most ungrateful for a soul born to immortality to complain.

18. And now methinks every man may interrogate himself in the same form, wherein *Jonadab* did *Amnon*, 2 Sam. 13. 4. *why art thou, being the Kings son, thus lean from day to day?* Why should a Person who is adopted by the King of Kings, thus languish and pine? What is there below the sun worthy his notice, much less his desires, that hath a Kingdom above it? Certainly did we but know how to estimate our selves upon this account, 'twere impossible for us with such sordid condescensions to court every petty worldly interest, and so impatiently vex our selves when we cannot attain it. Alas how unworthily do we bear the name of Christians, when that which carried the Forefathers of our Faith through the most fiery trials, cannot support us under the disappointment of any extravagant desire? They had such *respect to the recompence of the reward*, Heb. 11. 26. as made them chearfully expose their fame to ignominy, their Goods to rapine, their Bodies to the most exquisite tortures, and their Lives to death. Yet the same hopes cannot work us to any tolerable degree of patience, when we suffer but the smallest diminution in any of these. What shall we say, Is Heaven grown less valuable, or Earth more than it was then? No surely, but we are more infatuated in our estimates: we have so long abetted the rivalry of the hand-maid, that the Mistress, like *Sarah*, appears despicable. Like *Jonah* we sit down sullen upon the withering of a gourd, never considering that God has provided us a better shelter, *a building of God eternal in the Heavens*, 2 Cor. 5. 1. Indeed there can be no temporal destitution so great, which such an expectation cannot make supportable. Were we in *Job*'s condition sitting upon a dunghil, and scraping our selves with a potsheard, yet as long as we can say with him, *our Redeemer liveth*, Job 19. 25. we have all reason to say with him also,

blessed

blessed be the name of the Lord, Chap. 1. 21. What a madness is it then for us to expose our selves to be pierc'd and wounded by every temporal adversity, who have so impenetrable an armour? Nay what an ungrateful contumely is it to that goodness of God, to shew that we cannot make him a counterpoise to the most trivial secular satisfaction? On which account sure he may again take up that exprobrating complaint we find in the Prophet, *A goodly price, that I was valued at by them*, Zac. 11. 13.

19. But how mean soever he is in our eyes, though *Christ* seem the same to us in his glory which he did in his abjection, to have no beauty that we should desire him; yet he puts another rate upon himself, and tells us, *He that loves Father or Mother, Son or Daughter more than me, is not worthy of me*, Matth. 10. 37. Now our love and our joy are passions coincident, and therefore whatever we joy more in than we do in him, we may be presum'd to love better; and if he cannot endure the competition of those more ingenuous objects of our love he here mentions, how will he suffer that of our vanities, our childish wanton appetites? And yet those are the things after which we so impatiently rave. For I believe I may truly affirm, that if there were a scrutiny made into all the discontents of mankind, for one that were fastned upon any great considerable calamity, there are many that are founded only in the irregularity of our own desires.

Especially a soul redeem'd.

20. By what has been said we may justly conclude in the Prophets phrase, *God hath not been to us a wilderness, a land of darkness*, Jer. 2. 31. but has graciously dispenc'd to us in all our interests. Yet the instances here given are only common, such as relate to all, or at least the far greater part of mankind: but what volumes might be made, should every man set down his own particular experiences of mercy? In that case 'twould be no extravagant Hyperbole we find, *John* 22. 25. *That even the world it self could not contain the books which should be written.* God knows our memories are very frail, and our observations slight in this point: yet abstracting from all the forgotten or neglected favours, what vast catalogues may every man make to himself, if he would but yet recollect, what effects he has had of Gods bounty in giving, of his providence in protecting, of his grace in restraining and exciting, of his patience in forbearing? And certainly all these productions of the divine goodness were never design'd to die in the birth. The Psalmist will tell us, *the Lord hath so done his marvellous works, that they ought to be had in remembrance*, Psal. 111. 4. Let every man then make it his daily care to recount to himself the wonders God hath done, as for the children of men in general, so for himself in particular. When the *Israelites* murmured under their bondage, *Pharoah* imputes it to their idleness, and prescribes them more work, as the readiest cure: a piece indeed of inhuman Tyranny in him, but may with equity and success be practiced by us upon our selves. When we find our appetites mutinous, complaining of our present condition, let us set our selves to work, impose it as a task upon our selves to recollect the many instances of Gods mercies. And surely if we do it sincerely, and with intention, we cannot have past through half our stages, before our sullen murmurs will be beat out of countenance, and retire with shame, when they are confronted with such a cloud of witnesses, such signal testimonies of Gods goodness unto us: for when we have muster'd up all our little grievances, most critically examin'd all our wants, we shall find them very unproportionable to our comforts, and to our receipts; in which comparative notion, the next Section is to consider them.

Nothing but want of application of mind, could occasion our complaints.

Sect. IV.

Of the Surplusage of our Enjoyments above our Sufferings.

1. TO regulate our estimate of those things which we either enjoy or suffer, there are three precedent queries to be made: the first of their number or plenty, the second of their weight, the third of their constancy and continuance; for according as they partake more of these properties, every good is more good, and every evil is more evil. It will therefore be our best method of trial in the present case, to compare our blessings and our calamities in these three respects.

Our possessions may be estimated by their number, weight or continuance.

Our blessings are in number infinite.

2. And first in that of plenty. The mercies of God are the source of all our good, are set out to us in holy Scripture in the most *superlative* strain, they are *multitudes*, Psal. 102. 20. *Plenteous redemption*, Psal. 130. 7. *as high as the heaven*, Psal. 103. 11. *He fills all things living with plenteousness*, Psal. 145. 16. His mercies indeed are such as come not within the compass of number, but stretch themselves to infinity, and are best represented by such a calculation as God made to *Abraham*, when he shew'd the numerousness of his posterity by the innumerableness of the stars, *Gen.* 15. 5. Were there but a single mercy apportion'd to each minute of our lives, the sum would arise very high: but how is our Arithmetick confounded, when every minute has more than we can distinctly number? For besides the original stock mention'd in the last Section, and the accession of new bounty, the giving us somewhat which we had not before; what an accumulative mercy is it, the preserving what we have? We are made up of so many pieces, have such varieties of interests, spiritual, temporal, publick, and privave; for our selves, for our friends, and dependents; that it is not a confused general regard that will keep all in security one moment. We are like a vast building, which costs as much to maintain, as to erect. And indeed considering the corruptibleness of our materials, our preservation is no less a work of Omnipotence, than our first forming: nay prehaps 'tis rather a greater. Our original clay though it had no aptness, yet it had no aversions to the receiving a human form; but was in the hand of the potter to make it what he pleased: but we now have principles of decay within us, which vehemently tend to dissolution; we want the supplies of several things without us, the failing whereof returns us again to our dust. Nay we do not only need the aid, but we fear the hostility of outward things. That very air which sometimes, refreshes us, may at another starve and freeze us: that which warms and comforts us, has also a power of consuming us. Yea that very meat which nourishes, may choak and stifle us. In a word there is no creature so despicable, so inconsiderable, which may not sometimes serve us, and which may not at any time (if God permit) ruine us. Now whence is it that we so constantly, so frequently find the good, the benign efficacy of these things, and so seldom, so rarely the evil? Whence I say is it, but from the active unwearied providence, which draws forth the better properties of the creatures for our use, and restrains the worser for our security? which with a particular advertence watches not only over every Person, but over every several concern of that Person. And how astonishing a contemplation is this? If the meer ebbing and flowing of the sea, put the Philosopher into such an extasy, that he flung himself into it, because he could not comprehend the inscrutable cause of it; in what perpetual raptures of admiration may we be, who have every minute within us, and about us, more and greater wonders, and those too in our favour, when we deserve rather the Divine power should exert it self in our destruction?

Our misadventures much fewer.

3. But alas our danger from the visible creatures is little, compar'd with those from the spirits of darkness. *We wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with Principalities and Powers, with spiritual wickedness*, &c. Eph. 6. 12. So inveterate is the enmity between the *Serpent* and the *Seed* of the *Woman* in general, that he watches all advantages against us, not only in our souls, but even our bodies, our goods, and in every part of our concerns. Thus we see he not only assaulted *Job*'s soul by the wicked insinuations of his Wife, but (with more effect) his body with boiles and sores, his possessions by the *Caldeans* and *Sabeans*, and the images of himself, his dearest Children, by a wind from the wilderness, *Job* 1. And can we think his malice is now worn out? No surely he still wishes as ill to mankind as ever, and we should soon see the woful effects of it, did not the same power which let him loose for *Job*'s trial, restrain him for our safety. Nay had he but power to affright, though not to hurt us, even that would make our life very uncomfortable. We cannot hear the relation of Sprights or Apparitions, but our blood chills upon it, and a horrour runs through our veins: what should we then do if he should make his night-walks through our chambers, and with his illusory terrours disturb our rest? Yet all this and much more he would do, if God did not chain up this *old Dragon*, Rev. 20. Nay if he were not at the expence of a guard about us, and those no less than Angels. I shall not dispute whether every person hath not his peculiar Guardian: for though many have not improbably asserted it, we have ground enough of acquiescence in the general affirmation of the Apostle, *that they are all ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of Salvation*, Heb. 1. 4. And now if the Reader please to sum up how many are his concerns, and how many are the dangers which await him in them all, he cannot sure render the account of those

mercies

mercies which preserve the one, and divert the other, in any other phrase than that of the Psalmist, *They are more than I am able to express*, Psal. 40. 7.

The querulous cannot produce so many causes of complaint as they may of thanksgivings.

4. We may now challenge the most miserable, or the most querulous man living, to produce causes of complaint, proportionable to those of thanksgiving. He that has the greatest stock of calamities, can never vie with the heaps of benefits; the disproportion is greater than that of the armies of *Ahab* and *Ben-hadad*, 1 King. 20. 27. whereof the one was like *two little flocks of Kids, the other filled the country.* God has told us that *he afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men*, Lam. 3. 33. whereas on the contrary, he *delighted in mercy*, Mich. 7. 18. We may judge by our selves which he is the likeliest often to repeat, those acts which he doth with regret and reluctancy, or those which he do's with pleasure and delight. But we need no inferences where we have the attestation of experience. Let every man therefore make this his judge in the case, let him every night recollect, how many things within and about him he is concern'd in, and consider how many of those have been preserv'd entire to him, still accounting every thing so continued as a new donation. If he begin with his spiritual state, 'tis too possible he may sometimes find he has lost his Innocence, committed some, perhaps many sins: but even in these he will find cause to justify God, if he do but recollect with what inward checks and admonitions, and outward restraints, God has endeavour'd to bridle him. If he will break through those fences, that do's not at all derogate from the mercy of God which so guarded him, but it rather illustrates his goodness, that after so many quenchings of his Spirit, do's yet continue its influence. So that even he that has the most deplorably violated his integrity, is yet to confess that Gods purpose was to have preserv'd it entire: and he might really so have kept it, had he comply'd with those aids which were afforded him. But in temporal concerns we are not so apt to undermine our selves, and therefore shall more rarely find we have suffer'd detriment in them, than in our spiritual; but are there ordinarily like to meet with a better account. Let a man therefore consider what is lacking to him of all the secular good things he had in the morning, and tell me whether for the most part he may not give such an account, as the *Israelitish* officers did of their men after the slaughter of the *Midianites, that he had not lost one*, Num. 31. 30. Or if sometimes he do suffer a diminution, yet at the worst he will find that many more good things have been preserv'd to him, than have been taken from him. A man may perhaps meet with some damage in his estate, yet 'tis manifold odds that that damage is but partial, and that he has still more left than is lost. Or if it be more entire; yet if he have his health, his limbs, his senses, his friends, and all things beside his estate left him, so that for one thing he has lost, he still retains a multitude, he may say of it as the Disciples of the few Loaves, *What is this among so many?* Matt. 14. 17. *Aristippus* being bemoan'd for the loss of a Farm, replied with some sharpness upon his Condoler, You have but one field, and I have yet three left, why should I not rather grieve for you? intimating that a man is not so much to estimate what he has lost, as what he has left. A piece of wisdom which if we would transcribe we might quickly convince our selves, that even in our most adverse estate there are as *Elijah* speaks, *more with us than against us*, 2 King. 6. 16. that our enjoyments are more than our sufferings, and Gods acts of grace, do far out-number those of his severity.

Our blessings are weighty as well as numerous.

5. And as they do out-number, so also do they out-weigh them. The mercies we receive from God are (as the last Section has shew'd) of the greatest importance; the most substantial solid goods, and the greatest of all, I mean those which concern our eternal state, are so firmly fixt on us, that unless we will voluntarily quit our claim, 'tis not in the power of men or devils to defeat us. Light bodies are easily blown away by every gust of wind, but this *weight of glory*, as the Apostle calls it, 2 *Cor*. 4. 17. continues firm and stable, is proof against all storms, like the *shadow of a great rock in a weary land*, Isa. 32. 2. Those dark adumbrations we have of it, might have served to refresh and deceive the tediousness of our pilgrimage, and therefore the most formidable calamities of this life are below all measures of comparison with this hope of our calling, the *riches of the glory of our inheritance*, Eph. 3. 16. The heaviest and most pressing of our afflictions are to that, *but like the small dust of the ballance*, Esa. 40. 15. so that if we should here stop our inquisition, we have a sufficient resolution of the present question, and must conclude that God has given us an abundant counterpoise of all, we either do or can suffer here.

The denial of temporal good things is a proof of an interest in spiritual: and even the most calamitous have many great blessings.

6. If therefore there be any so forlorn as to temporals, that he can fetch thence no evidence of Gods fatherly care of him, yet this one consideration may solve his doubts, and convince him that he is not abdicated by him. We read of no *gifts Abraham* gave *Isaac*, yet to the sons of the concubines 'tis said he did, *Gen.* 25. 6. It had been a very fallacious inference, if *Isaac* should have concluded himself neglected, because his far greater portion was but in reversions. And it will be the same in any of us, if we argue an unkindness from any temporal wants who have the entail of an eternal inheritance. But surely *God do's not leave himself without a witness*, Acts 14. 17. even in secular things; there is no man breathing but has some blessings of his left hand, as well as his right, as I have already mention'd: and unless it be some few prodigies of Calamity in whose punishment or patience God designs signally to glorify himself, there are none who enjoy not greater comforts of life than those they want, I mean such as are really greater, though perhaps, to their prejudicated fancies they do not appear so. Thus in point of health, if a man be disaffected in one part, yet all the rest of his body may be (and often is) well; or if he have a complication, and have more than one disease, yet there is no man that has all, or half so many as are incident to human bodies; so that he is comparatively more healthy than sick. So again it is not very common for a man to lose a limb, or sense, the generality of men keep them to their last; and they who do, have in that an over-balance to most outward adversities; and even they who are so unhappy to lose one, yet commonly keep the rest; at least the major part: or if at any time any man is left a meer breathing trunk, yet it is by such stupifying diseases as dead the sense, or such mortal ones as soon take them away: and so the remedy overtakes the Malady. Besides it pleases God very often, to make compensation for the want of one member or faculty by improving the use of another. We have seen feet supply all the necessary uses of hands to those who have had none; and it is a thing of daily observation that men that are blind, have the greater internal light: have their intellects more vigorous and active, by their abstractions from visible objects.

The poor man has more real pleasures than the rich.

7. Thus also it is in the matter of wealth, he that is forc'd to get his bread by the sweat of his brows, 'tis true he cannot have those delicacies wherewith rich men abound; yet his labour helps him to a more poignant, a more savory sauce than a whole College of Epicures can compound. His hunger gives a higher gust to his dry crust, than the surfeited stomach can find in the most costly, most elaborate mixtures: so verifying the observation of *Solomon, the full soul loatheth the honey comb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*, Prov. 27. 7. He cannot *indeed stretch himself upon his bed of Ivory*, Amos 6. 4. yet his sleeps are sounder than those that can. The wise man tells us, and experience do's so too, that *the sleep of a labouring man is sweet*, Eccles. 5. 12. He is not clothed gorgeously, has not the splendor of glittering apparel, so neither has he the care of contriving it, the fears of being forestall'd in a new invention, or any of those unmanly solicitudes which attend that vanity. He has the proper genuine use of cloathing; the preventing shame and cold, and is happily determin'd to that which the wiser men of the world have voluntarily chosen. To conclude he has one advantage beyond all these; his necessities rescue him from idleness, and all its consequent temptations; which is so great a benefit, that if rich men be not their own taskmasters as his wants are his, if they do not provide themselves of business; that one want of theirs is infinitely more deplorable than all his: and he is not only happy comparatively with himself, in having better things than he wants, but with them also.

Privacy is more desirable than eminence.

8. If we come now to reputation and fame, the account will be much the same. He that is eminent in the world for some great atchievement, is set up as an object of every mans remark; when as his excellencies on the one hand are visible, so his faults and blemishes are on the other. And as human frailty makes it too probable these latter will be really more, so human envy makes it sure that they shall be more precisely, more curiously observ'd, and more loudly blazon'd. So that upon the whole, a good quiet security, though it be not the road to glory, yet it is the likeliest fence against infamy. And indeed he that can keep up the repute of a sober integrity within his own private sphere, need not envy the triumphant sallies of others, which often meet with a fatal turn at the latter end of the day. But 'twill be said that even that more moderate sort of reputation is not every mans portion, but that many lie under great ignominy and scandals. I shall here ask whether those be just or unjust: if they be just they belong not to our present subject, which relates only to those inflictions which are the effects of Gods immediate providence,

not

not of our own crimes; for I never doubted but that by those we may divest our selves of any, nay of all the good things God has design'd us. But if the obloquy be unjust, 'tis probable that 'tis taken up only by ill men, and that the Good pass a more equitable sentence; and then surely the attestation of a few such, is able to outweigh a multitude of the others. And in this case a man may not only find patience but pleasure in reproaches. *Socrates* look'd with trouble and jealousy on himself when ill men commended him, saying, What ill have I done? and sure a Christian has a farther reason to be pleased with their revilings, they being his security against the *woe* pronounc'd to those *whom all men speak well of*, Luke 6. 26. But sometimes it happens, that even good men are seduc'd, and either by the artifices of the Wicked, or their own too hasty credulity, give credit to unjust reports. And this I confess is a sharp trial to the injur'd person, yet even this cannot often be universal; there can scarce be any innocence so forlorn but that there may be opportunities of clearing it to some or other, and by them propagating it to more, and if the cloud ever come to be dispers'd, their fame will appear with the brighter luster. But if none of this happen, they have yet a certain and more blessed retreat, even an appeal to the unerring Judge, who never beholds us with more approbation, than when we are under the unjust condemnation of men. Indeed we have then a double tie upon him, not only his Justice, but his Pity is concern'd in our cause. God particularly owns himself as the refuge of the oppressed, and there is scarce a sharper and more sensible oppression than this of Calumny: yet even this proves advantage, whilst it procures God's immediate patronage, makes us the objects of his more peculiar care and compassion, who can *make our righteousness as clear as the light*, Psalm 37. 6. if he see it fit; but if in his wisdom he chuse not that for us, 'tis comfort enough for us that we have approv'd it to him. 'Twas *Elkanah*'s question to *Hannah* in her disconsolation, *Am I not better to thee than ten Sons*? 1 Sam. 1. 8. And sure we may say the like of God's approbation, that 'tis better to us, I say not than ten, but ten thousand Eulogies of men. The very Eccho of it in the testimony of a good conscience is an unspeakable comfort, and this voice sounds more audibly, more sweetly among the loudest, the harshest accusations of men. So that we see even this assault too is not without its guard, and these *waters of Marah*, Exod. 15. 23. may be rendred not only wholsome, but pleasant.

Misadventures in point of friendship are counterbalanced.

9. I have now instanced in the three most general concerns of human life, the Body, Goods, and Fame, to which heads may be reduced most of the afflictions incident to our outward state, as far as immediately concerns our selves. But there is no man stands so single in the world, but he has some relations or friends in which he thinks himself interessed, and many times those oblique strokes which wound us through them, are as painful as the most direct: yet here also God is ordinarily pleased to provide some allays, if we would but take notice of them. He who has had one friend die, has ordinarily divers others surviving; or if he have not that, usually God raises him up others. 'Tis true we cannot have a succession of Fathers or Mothers, yet we often have of other friends that are no less helpful to us: and indeed there are scarce in any thing more remarkable evidences of Providence, than in this particular. *He that is able out of stones to raise up children to Abraham*, Matt. 3. 9. do's many times by as unexpected a production supply friends to the desolate. But we do sometimes lose our friends while they are living, they withdraw their kindness which is the soul of friendship: and if this happen by our own demerit, we can accuse neither God nor them for it: nor can we rationally expect that God should provide supplies, when we wilfully despoil our selves. But when they are unkind without provocation, then is the season for his interposition, who uses to take up *those whom Father and Mother forsake*, Psalm 27. 10. and we frequently see signal proofs of his care in exciting the compassions of other friends and relatives, or perhaps of meer strangers. Nay sometimes God make the inhumanity of a man's relations, the occasion of his advantage. Thus the barbarous malice of *Joseph*'s brethren was the first step to his Dominion over *Egypt*. And it is a common observation in Families, that the most discountenanc'd child oft makes better proof, than the dearling.

Whatsoever calamities they sustain they have the same before-recited alleviations with our own.

10. We are yet liable to a third affliction by the calamity of our friends, which by the Sympathy of Kindness presses us no less (perhaps more) sensibly than our own: but then 'tis to be consider'd that theirs are capable of the same allaying circumstances that ours are, and God has the same arts of alleviating their burdens; so that we have the same arguments for acquiescence in their sufferings that we have in our own, and shall do a more friendly office in impressing those upon them, than in the most passionate adopting their sorrows.

Even the sin of a Relative is not void of all comfort.

11. The last and greatest discomfort from friends, is that of their sin: and if ever we may be allow'd that disconsolate strain of the Prophet, *Esa.* 22. 4. *Turn away from me, I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me*; this seems to be the time. Yet even this *valley of Achor is not without a door of hope*, Hos. 22. 15. A vicious person may be recalled, multitudes have been; so that as long as God continues life, we ought no more to deposite our hope than to quit our endeavour. Besides there are few that make this complaint that have not something to balance, or at least to lighten it. I shall instance in that relation which is the nearest and most tender, that of a Parent. He that has one bad child, may have divers good. If he have but one vertuous 'tis a very great mercy, and 'tis another that he may be the better taught to value it by the opposition of the contrary. But if any be so unhappy as to have many children, and *all to consume his eyes and grieve his heart*, 1 Sam. 2. 33. it may be a seasonable reflection for him to examine how far he has contributed to it, either by *Ely*'s fond indulgence, or by a remiss and careless education: or which is worst of all, by his own impious example. If any, or all of these be found the cause, he is not so much to seek for allays to his grief, as for pardon of his sin: and when he has penitently retracted his own faults, he may then have better ground of hope that God may reform those of his children. In the mean time he may look on his own affliction in them as God's discipline on him, and gather at least this comfort from it, that his heavenly Father has more care of him, than he had of his; and does not leave him uncorrected.

As in the greater world there grow specificks for the maladies of every clime, so it is in the lesser.

12. Thus we see in all the concerns (which are the most common and important of human life, and wherein the justest of our complaints are usually founded) there is such a temperature and mixture, that the good do's more than equal the ill; and that not only in the grosser bulk, when our whole state is weighed together, but in every single branch of it: God having herein dealt with this little world, Man, as he has done with the greater, wherein he is observ'd to have furnished every country with Specifick remedies for their peculiar diseases. I have only given these short hints by way of essay and pattern for the Readers contemplation, which when he shall have extended to all those more minute particulars wherein he is especially concern'd, more curiously compar'd his sufferings with his allays and comforts; I cannot doubt but he will own himself an instance of the truth of the present Thesis, and confess, that he has much more cause of thankfulness than complaint.

They who have no crosses of God's imposing, create a multitude to themselves.

13. This I say supposing his afflictions to be of those more solid and considerable sorts I have before mention'd. But how many are there who have few or none of such, who seem to be seated in the land of *Goshen*, in a place exempt from all the plagues that infest their neighbours? And those one would think should give a ready suffrage to this conclusion, as having no temptation to oppugn it; yet I doubt 'tis far otherwise, and that such men are of all the most unsatisfied. For though they have no crosses of Gods imposing, they usually create a multitude to themselves. And here we may say with *David*, *it is better to fall into the hand of God, than into the hand of man*, 2 Sam. 24. 14. 'tis easier to bear the afflictions, God sends, than those we make to our selves. His are limited both for quantity and quality, but our own are as boundless as those extravagant desires from which they spring.

Those discontents which are most causeless are most importunate.

14. And this is the true cause why contentment is so much a stranger to those who have all the outward causes of it. They have no definite measure of their desires: 'tis not the supply of all their real wants will serve their turn: their appetites are precarious and depend upon contingences. They hunger not because they are empty, but because others are full. Many a man would have liked his own portion well enough, had he not seen another have something he liked better. Nay even the most inconsiderable things acquire a value by being anothers, when we despise much greater of our own. *Ahab* might well have satisfied himself with the kingdom of *Israel*, had not *Naboths* poor plot lain in his eye: but so raving were his desires after it, that he disrelishes all the pomps of a Crown, yea the ordinary refreshments of Nature, *can eat no bread* till he hath that to furnish him with Sallads, 1 *Kings* 21. 2. And how many are there now adays whose cloaths sit uneasy if they see another have had but the luck to be a little more ingeniously vain; whose meat is unsavoury if they have seen but a greater rarity, a newer cookery at anothers Table: in a word who make other peoples Excesses the standard of their own Felicities.

15. Nor are our appetites only excited thus by our outward objects, but precipitated and hurried on by our inward lusts. The proud man so longs for homage and adoration, that nothing can please him if that be wanting. *Haman* can find no gust in all the sensualities of the *Persian* Court, because a poor despicable Jew denies his obeisance, *Esth.* 5. 13. The lustful so impatiently pursues his impure designs, that any difficulty he meets in them, makes him pine and languish like *Amnon*, who could no way recover his own health but by violating his sisters honour, 2 *Sam.* 13. 14. The revengeful labours under an Hydropick thirst till he have the blood of his enemy: all the liquor of *Absaloms* sheep-sheering could not quench his, without the slaughter of his brother, 2 *Sam.* 13. 22. And thus every one of our passions keeps us upon the rack till they have obtained their designs. Nay when they have, the very emptiness of those acquisitions is a new torment, and put us upon fresh pursuits. Thus between the impetuousness of our desires, and the emptiness of our enjoyments, we still *disquiet our selves in vain*, Psal. 39. 7. And whilst we have such cruel task-masters 'tis not strange to find us groaning under our burdens. If we will indulge to all our vicious or foolish appetites, think our lives bound up with them, and sollicite the satisfaction of them with as impatient a vehemence, as *Rachel* did for children, *Gen.* 30. 1. *give me them or I die*: no wonder that we are always complaining of disappointments, since in these the very success is a defeat, and is but the exchanging the pain of a craving ravenuous stomach, for that of a cloi'd and nauseated. Indeed men of this temper condemn themselves to a perpetual restlesness: they are like phantastick mutineers, who when their superiours send them blanks to write their own conditions, know not what will please them: and even Omnipotence it self cannot satisfy these till it have new moulded them, and reduced their desires to a certainty.

As our appetites are excited by outward objects; so they are hurried on by inward lusts.

16. But in the mean time how unjustly do they accuse God of illiberality, because every thing answers not their humor? He has made them reasonable creatures, and has provided them satisfactions proportionable to their nature; but if they will have wild irrational expectations, neither his wisdom, nor his goodness is concern'd to satisfy those. His supplies are real and solid, and therefore have no correspondence to imaginary wants. If we will create such to our selves, why do we not create an imaginary satisfaction to them? 'Twere the merrier frenzy of the two, to be like the mad *Athenian* that thought all the ships that came into his harbour his own; and 'twere better *Ixion* like to have our Arms fill'd with a cloud, than to have them perpetually beating our own breasts, and be still tormenting our selves with unsatisfiable desires. Yet this is the state to which men voluntarily subject themselves, and then quarrel at God because they will not let themselves be happy. But sure their very complaints justify God, and argue that he has dealt very kindly with them, and afforded them all the necessary accommodations of life: for did they want them, they would not be so sensible of the want of the other. He that is at perfect ease may feel with some vexation the biting of a flea or gnat, which would not be at all observable if he were upon the rack. And should God change the scene, and make these nice people feel the destitution of necessaries: all these regrets about superfluities would be overwhelmed. In the mean time how deplorable a thing is it, that we are still the poorer for Gods bounty, that those to whom he has opened his hand widest, should open their mouth so too, in out-cries and murmurs? For I think I may say that generally, those that are the farthest remov'd from want, are so from content too; they take no notice of all the real substantial blessings they enjoy, leave these (like the ninety nine sheep in the wilderness) forgotten and neglected, to go in quest after some fugitive satisfaction, which like a shadow flies still faster in proportion to their pursuit.

A great cause of our discontent, is the enjoyment of what we desire.

17. And now would God they could be recalled from this unprofitable chase, and instead of the Horsleeches note, *Give, give*, Prov. 30. 15. take up that of the Psalmist, *what shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits he hath done unto me?* Psal. 116. 12. Let them count how many valuable or rather inestimable things, they have received from his mercy, and then confront them with those corrections they have found from his justice; and if they do this impartially, I doubt not they will find wherewithal to check their highest mutinies; and will joyn with me in confessing, that their good things abundantly outweigh their ill.

We ought to be grateful for what we have receiv'd before we repine for want of more.

18. If now we carry on the comparison to the last circumstance, and consider the Constancy, we shall find as wide a difference. Let us take the Psalmists testimony, and there will appear a very distant date of his mercies and punishments. *His mercies endure for ever*, Psal. 136. whereas his wrath *endures but the twinkling of*

The duration of mercies surpasses that of judgments.

an eye, Psal. 30. 5. And accordingly God owns his acts of severity as his *strange work*, Isa. 28. 21. that which he resorts to only upon special emergencies; but his mercies *are renewed every morning*, Lam. 3. 25. and doubtless we may all upon trial affirm the same. There are many of the most necessary comforts of life which do not only sometimes visit us as guests, but dwell with us as inmates and domesticks. How many are there who have lived in a perpetual affluence from their cradles to their graves, have never known what it is to want? And though the goods of fortune are perhaps less constant to some, yet the refreshments of nature are usually so to us all. We eat and drink, we sleep, we recreate, we converse in a continued circle, and go our round almost as constantly as the Sun do's his. Or if God do's sometimes a little interrupt us in it, put some short restraint upon our refreshments, yet that comparatively to the time we enjoy them, is but proportionable to the stop he has sometimes made of the Sun, *Josh.* 10. 13. 2 *Kings* 20. 11. or of the sea, *Exod.* 14. 21. which as they were no subversions of the course of nature, so neither are those short pauses he sometimes makes, a repeal of those fixt and customary benefits his providence usually allots us. But who is there can say that any one of his afflictions has been of equal continuance, or has prest him with so few intermissions? Perhaps he may have mist some few nights sleep: but what is that to a twelve-months, or perhaps a whole lifes enjoying it? Tis possible his stomach and his meat have not always been ready together; but how much oftner have they met to his delight? and generally those things that are most useful, are but rarely interrupted. Nay to a great many even the delicacies of life are no less constant, and their luxuries are as quotidian as their bread: whereas unless their vices or their fancies create uneasinesses to them, those that come immediately from God's hand, make long intermissions and short staies. Yet for all this they that should measure by the unceasantness of mens complaints, would judge that the scene was quite reverst, and that our good things are as *Job* speaks, *swifter than a weavers shuttle*, Job 7. 6. whilst our ills, like *Gehazies Leprosy*, *cleave inseparably to us*, 2 Kings 5. 10.

When calamities are past, we keep them in fiction, like aguish patients count our selves sick on our well day.

19. The truth is, we will not let our selves enjoy those intervals God allows us, but when a calamity do's retire we will still keep it in fiction and imagination; revolve it in our minds, and because 'tis possible it may return, look upon it as not gone. Like aguish patients we count our selves sick on our well-day, because we expect a fit the next. A strange stupid folly thus to court vexation, and be miserable in Chimera. Do's any man, or indeed any beast desire to keep a distastful relish still in his mouth, to chew the cud upon gall and wormwood? yet certainly there are a multitude of people whose lives are imbitter'd to them meerly by these fantastick imaginary sufferings. Nor do we only fright our selves with images and Ideas of past calamities, but we dress up new bugbears and mormoes, are Poetick and aerial in our inventions, and lay Romantick scenes of distresses. This is a thing very incident to jealous natures, who are always raising alarms to themselves. A suspicious man looks on every body with dread. One man he fears has designs upon his fortune, another on his reputation, perhaps a third upon his life: whilst in the mean time, the only ill design against him is managed by himself; his own causeless fears and jealousies, which put him in a state of hostility with all the world, and do often betray him to the very things he groundlesly suspected. For it is not seldom seen that men have incur'd real mischiefs by a fond sollicitude of avoiding imaginary ones. I do not question but this is a state calamitous enough, and shall acknowledge it very likely that such persons shall have little or no truce from their troubles, who have such an unexhausted spring within themselves; yet we may say to them as the Prophet did to the house of *Jacob*, *Is the spirit of the Lord straitned? are these his doings?* Micha 2. 7. Such men must not cry out that God's hand lies heavy upon them, but their own; and so can be no impeachment to the truth of our observations, that God's blessings are of a longer duration, keep a more fixt, steady course than his punishments. The result of all is, that the generality of mankind have good things (even as to temporals) which do in the three respects forementiond exceed the ill. I mean the true and real things which God sends, though not those fanciful ones they raise to themselves.

'Tis equally imprudent and unjust to entertain our selves with the unpleasant part of Gods dispensations.

28. And now why should it not appear a reasonable proposition that men should entertain themselves with the pleasanter parts of Gods dispensations to them, and not always pore upon the harsher: especially since the former are so much a fairer object, and perpetually in their eye, why should we look on the more sadning spectacles of human frailty or misfortune, through all the magnifying opticks our fancies can supply, and perversly turn away our eyes from the chearfuller? Yet this

God

God knows is too much the case with most of us. How nicely and critically do we observe every little adverse accident of our lives? What tragical stories of them do our memories present us with? When alas a whole current of prosperity glides by without our notice. Like little children our fingers are never off the sore place, till we have pick'd every little scratch into an Ulcer. Nay like the lewder sort of beggars, we make artificial sores to give us a pretence of complaint. And can we then expect God should concern himself in the cure? Indeed in the course of his ordinary providence there is no cure for such people, unless it be by revulsion, the making them feel the smart of some very great and pressing affliction. They therefore put themselves under an unhappy dilemma, either to continue their own tormentors, or to endure the severest course of Gods discipline. 'Tis true the last is the more eligible; but I am sure the best way is to prevent both, by a just and grateful sense of Gods mercies: which will be yet farther illustrated if we compare them with our own demerits.

SECT. V.

Of our Demerit towards God.

Our dealing with God is contrary to all methods of commerce with men.

1. IT is the common fault of our nature, that we are very apt to be partial to our selves; and to square our expectations more by what we wish, than by what we desire. Something of this is visible in our dealings with men. We oft *look to reap where we have not sown*, Matt. 25. 25. expect benefits where we do none; yet in civil transactions there are still remaining such footsteps of natural justice, that we are not universally so unreasonable: All traffick and commerce subsisting upon the principle of equal retribution, giving one good thing for another equivalent; so that no man expects to buy corn with chaff, or Gold with dross. But in our dealings with God, we put off even this common equity; are vast in our expectations, but penurious and base in our returns; and as if God were our steward, not our Lord, we require of him with a confidence proper only to those who ask their own: whilst in the interim, what we offer to him is with such a disdainful slighting, as if we meant it rather an alms than an homage.

Gods first donations are free, but his subsequent are conditional.

2. God is indeed so munificent, that he *prevents us with his blessings*, Psal. 21. 3. gives us many things before we ask: Had he not done so, we could not have been so much as in a capacity of asking. But though the first and fundamental mercies are absolute and free, yet the subsequent are conditional: and accordingly we find in Scripture, that God makes no promise either concerning this life or a better, but on condition of obedience. The *Jews* who had much larger proposals of temporal happiness than Christians have, yet never had them upon other terms. God expresly articled for the performance of his commands, and made all their enjoyments forfeitable upon the failure, as we may see at large in the book of Deuteronomy. And under the Gospel St. *Paul* appropriates the *promises as well of this life as that to come unto godliness*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. It will therefore be a material inquiry for every man, whether he have kept his title entire, and have not by breach of the condition, forfeited his claim, even to the most common ordinary blessings; for if he have, common reason will tell him he can challenge none: and that the utmost he can hope for, must be only upon a new score of unmerited favour.

Our services make a very unequal return to our obligations.

3. And here certainly *every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*, Rom. 3. 19. For alas who is there that can say his obedience has been in any degree proportionable to his obligation? 'Tis manifest we have all received abundantly from Gods hand, but what has he had from ours? I may challenge the best man, to cast up the account of his best day, and tell me whether his receipts have not infinitely exceeded his disbursments: whether for any one good thing he has done, he has not received many. Nor is the disparity only in number, but much more in value. Gods works are perfect, all he do's for us like the first six days productions, *are all very good*, Gen. 1. but alas our very *righteousness is as filthy rags*, Esa. 64. 6. we offer *him the blind and the lame*, Mal. 1. 9. a few yawning drowsy prayers perhaps, wherein he has the least share: the fuller current of our thoughts running towards our secular or sinful concerns. We drop it may be a scanty Alms,

wherein 'tis odds our vain glory ſcrambles for a ſhare with him; if it do not wholly ingroſs it. We ſit an hour at a Sermon, but 'tis rather to hear the wit or eloquence of the Preacher, than the word of God. Like the duller ſort of animals, we like well to have our itching ears ſcratch'd, but grow ſturdy and reſtive when we ſhould do what we are there taught. In a word all our ſervices at the beſt are miſerably maim'd and imperfect; and too often corrupt and unſound. So that God may well upbraid us as he did *Iſrael, offer it now to thy governour, will he be pleaſed with it?* Mal. 1. 8. Theſe very iniquities of our holy things, are enough to defeat all our pretences to any good from Gods hand; yet God knows this is much the beſt ſide of us: 'tis not every one that can make ſo fair an appearance as this amounts to. With many, there is no place to complain of the blemiſhes of their ſacrifices, for they offer none; of whom we may ſay in the words of the Pſalmiſt, *God is not in all their thoughts*, Pſal. 10. 4. I fear there want not thoſe who drive away the day, the week, nay the year, without remembring in whoſe *hand their time is*, Pſal 31. 18. or paying him any ſolemn tribute of it; who enjoy the ſervices of all inferiour creatures, without conſidering that theirs are more due to the ſupream Lord: in a word, who live as if they were abſolutely independent; had their exiſtence purely from themſelves, and had no Creator to whom they owed their being or any conſequent duty. And ſure men who thus diſcard themſelves from Gods family, have very little reaſon to expect the proviſions of it: yet even ſuch as theſe have the impudence to complain, if any thing be wanting to their needs (ſhall I ſay) or their luſts; can ravingly profane Gods name in their impatiences, which they know not how to uſe in their prayers: as if the Deity were conſiderable in no other notion, than that of their caterer or ſteward.

God's patience herein, is moſt admirable.

4. If now we ſeriouſly reflect, what can be more admirable than that infinite patience of God; who notwithſtanding the miſerable infirmities of the pious, and the lewd contempt of the impious, ſtill goes on reſolutely in his bounty, and continues to all mankind ſome, and to ſome all his temporal bleſſings? He has no obligation of juſtice to do ſo, for it is no part of his compact; he has none of gratitude, for he is perpetually affronted and diſobliged. Surely we may well ſay with *David, Is this after the manner of men, O Lord?* 1 Chron. 17. 17. Can the higheſt human indulgence bear any proportion with his divine Clemency? No certainly, no finite patience but would be exhauſted with the thouſandth part of our provocations.

And ſo is the inſolence of our repining

5. But is not our dealing too as little after the manner of men? I mean of reaſonable creatures: for us who have forfeited our right to all, and yet by meer favour are kept in poſſeſſion of many bleſſings: for us to grow mutinous, becauſe there is perhaps ſomething more trifling which is denied us, is ſuch a ſtupid ingratitude, as one would think impoſſible to human nature. Should a Tenant with us have at once forfeited his leaſe and maliciouſly affronted his Landlord, he would ſure think himſelf very gently dealt with, if he were ſuffer'd to enjoy but a part of his firſt eſtate; but we ſhould think him not only inſolent, but mad, who when the whole were left him, ſhould quarrel and clamor if he might not have his Cottage adorn'd with marble floors, and guilded roofs. Yet at this wild rate we behave our ſelves to our great Landlord, grow pettiſh and angry if we have not every thing we can fancy, though we enjoy many more uſeful, meerly by his indulgence. And can there be any thing imagin'd more unreaſonable? Let us therefore, if not for piety, yet at leaſt to juſtify our claim to rationality, be more ingenuous: let us not conſult only with our fond appetites, and be thus perpetually ſolliciting their ſatisfaction; but rather reflect on what tenure we hold what we already have, even that of ſuperabundant mercy; and fear leſt like inſolent beggars by the inſolence of our demands we divert even that charity which was deſign'd us. In ſhort let every man when he computes what he wants of his deſires, reckon as exactly how much he is ſhort of his duty; and when he has duly ponder'd both, he will think it a very gentle compoſition to have the one unſupplied, ſo he may have the other remitted; and will ſee cauſe contentedly to ſit down and ſay with honeſt *Mephiboſheth, What right have I to cry any more unto the King?* 2 Sam. 19. 28. But if it be thus with us upon the meer ſcore of our imperfections or omiſſions, what an obnoxious ſtate do our innumerable actual ſins put us in? If the ſpots of our ſacrifices are provoking, what are our ſacrileges and bold profanations? If thoſe who neglect or forget God are liſted among his enemies, what are thoſe who avowedly defie him? Indeed he that ſoberly conſiders the world, and ſees how daringly the Divine Majeſty is daily affronted, cannot but wonder that the perverſions of our manners, thoſe prodigies in morality, ſhould not be anſwer'd with as great prodigies in calamity

too:

too: that we ſhould ever have other ruin than that of *Sodom*, or the earth ſerve us for any other purpoſe than to be, as it was to *Korah*, Numb. 16. our living ſepulchre.

6. Nor is this longanimity of God obſervable only towards the maſs and collective body of mankind, but to every man in particular. Who is there that if he ranſack his conſcience, ſhall not find guilts enough to juſtify God in the utmoſt ſeverities towards him? ſo that how much ſoever his puniſhments are ſhort of that, ſo much he evidently owes to the lenity and compaſſion of God. And who is there that ſuffers in this world the utmoſt that God can inflict? We have a great many ſuffering capacities, and if thoſe were all fill'd up to the height, our condition would ſcarce differ from that of the damned in any thing but duration. But God is more merciful, and never inflicts at that rate on us here. Every mans experience can tell him, that God diſcharges not his whole quiver at once upon him, but exempts him in many more particulars than he afflicts him; and yet the ſame experience will probably tell moſt of us, that we are not ſo modeſt in our aſſaults upon God; we attack him in all his concerns, (as far as our feeble malice can reach) in his Soveraignty, in his honour, in his relatives, nay ſometimes in his very eſſence and being. And as they are univerſal in reſpect of him, ſo alſo in regard of our ſelves. We engage all our powers in this war, do not only *yield* (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) *our members inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs*, Rom. 6. 19. but we preſs them upon the ſervice of ſenſual and vile luſts, even beyond our native propenſions. Nor are only the members of our body, but the faculties of our ſouls alſo thus employ'd; our underſtandings are buſied firſt in contriving ſins, and then excuſes and diſguiſes for them; our wills are yet more ſturdy rebels, and when the underſtanding is beat out of all its out-works, yet ſullenly keep their hold in ſpight of all conviction; and our affections madly ruſh on *like the horſe into the battle*, Jer. 8. 6. deterred by nothing of danger, ſo there be but ſin enough in the attempt.

Our ill demerit towards God has all possible aggravations.

7. And now with what face can people that thus purſue an hoſtility, expect that it ſhould not be return'd to them? Do's any man denounce war, and yet expect from his adverſary all the careſſes, the obligements of friendſhip? ſelf-defence will prompt even the meekeſt nature to deſpoil his enemy, at leaſt of thoſe things which he uſes to his annoiance; and if God ſhould give way even to that loweſt degree of anger, where or what were we? For ſince we employ our whole ſelves againſt him, nothing but deſtruction can avert our injuries. But 'tis happy for us we have to do with one who cannot fear us, who knows the impotence of our wild attempts, and ſo allays his reſentment of our inſolence, with his pity of our follies. Were it not for this, we ſhould not be left in a poſſibility ſo oft to iterate our provocations. Every wicked imagination and black deſign, would be at once defeated and puniſh'd by infatuation and frenzy: every blaſphemous Atheiſtical ſpeech would wither the tongue like that *arm of Jeroboam* which he ſtretch'd againſt the Prophet, 1 *King*. 13. 4. and every impious act would like the prohibited retroſpect of *Lots* wife, fix us perpetual monuments of Divine vengeance.

And were not God infinitely merciful, would be fatal to the guilty.

8. And then how much do we owe to the mercy and commiſeration of our God, that *he ſuffers not his whole diſpleaſure to ariſe*, Pſal. 78. 38. that he abates any thing of that juſt ſeverity he might uſe towards us? He that is condemned to the Gallows, would think it a mercy to ſcape with any inferiour penality: why have we then ſuch mean thoughts of God's Clemency, when he deſcends to ſuch low compoſitions with us, corrects us ſo lightly, as if 'twere only matter of ceremony and punctilio, the regard of his honour, rather than the execution of his wrath? For alas let him among us that is the moſt innocent and undeſervedly afflicted, muſter up his ſins and ſufferings, and he will ſee a vaſt inequality: and (had he not other grounds of aſſurance) would be almoſt tempted to think thoſe were not the provoking cauſe, they are ſo unproportionably anſwered. He ſins in innumerable inſtances, and is puniſh'd in few; he ſins habitually and perpetually, and ſuffers rarely and ſeldom; nay perhaps he has ſometimes ſin'd with greedineſs, and yet God has puniſh'd with regret and reluctancy, *How ſhall I give thee up, O Ephraim?* Hoſ. 11. 8. And when all theſe diſparities are conſider'd, we muſt certainly joyn heartily in *Ezra*'s confeſſion, *Thou O God, haſt puniſh'd us leſs than our iniquities deſerve*, Ezra 9. 13.

Which forbearance ought to lead to repentance.

9. Nay beſides all our antecedent, we have after-guilts no leſs provoking, I mean our ungracious repinings at the light chaſtiſements of our former ſins, our out-cries upon every little uneaſineſs, which may juſtly cauſe God to turn our whips into ſcorpions; and according as he threatned *Iſrael*, Lev. 26. 18. *to puniſh us yet ſeven times more*. And yet even this do's not immediately exaſperate him. The *Jews*

Our after-guilts or repinings aggravate our precedent provocations.

were an instance how long he could bear with a murmuring generation, but certainly we of this nation are a greater: *yet let us not be high-minded, but fear*, Rom. 11. 20. for we see at last the doom fell heavy, though it was protracted: a succession of miraculous judgments pursued those murmurers, so that not one of them enter'd *Canaan*. And 'tis very observable that whereas to other sins God's denunciations are in Scripture conditional and reversible; this was absolute and bound with an oath, *He sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest*, Psalm 95. 11. And yet if we compare the hardships of the *Israelites* in the wilderness, with most of our sufferings, we shall be forced to confess our mutinies have less temptation, and consequently less excuse. From whence 'tis very reasonable to infer, as the greatness of our danger if we persist, so the greatness of God's long-suffering towards us, who yet allows us space to reform, and sure new complaints sound very ill from us, who are liable to so severe an account for our old ones. I fear the most resign'd persons of us will upon recollection find, they have upon one occasion or other outvied the number of the *Israelites* murmurs: therefore unless we will emulate them in their plagues, let us fear to add one more, lest that make up the fatal sum, and render our destruction irrevocable.

Especially when our sufferings are the immediate effects of our sins.

10. Upon all these considerations it appears how little reason any of us have to repine at our heaviest pressures; but there is yet a farther circumstance to be adverted to, and is too applicable to many of us, that is, that our sins are not only the constant meritorious cause of our sufferings, but they are also very often the instrumental cause also; and produce them not only by way of retaliation from God, but by a natural efficacy. *Solomon* tells us, he that *loves pleasure, shall be a poor man*, and that *a whorish woman will bring a man to a piece of bread*, Prov. 6. 26. *that he that sits long at the wine shall have redness of eyes*, Chap. 23. 29, 30. *that the slothful soul shall suffer hunger*, 19. 15. and all these not by immediate supernatural infliction from God, but as the proper genuine effects of those respective vices. Indeed God in his original establishment of things, has made so close a connexion between sin and punishment, that he is not often put to exert his power in any extraordinary way, but may trust us to be our own Lictors, our own *backslidings reprove us*, Jer. 2. 19. *and our iniquities are* of themselves enough to *become our ruin*, Exod. 18. 38.

In all calamities it will be fit for us to enquire how far we are accessary to them.

11. It may therefore be a seasonable question for every man to put to himself, whether the troubles he labours under be not of this sort; whether the poverty he complains of, be not the effect of his riot and profusion, his sloth and negligence? whether when he cries out that *his comeliness is turn'd into corruption*, Dan. 10. 8. he may not answer himself, that they are his visits to the harlots houses which have thus made *rottenness enter into his bones*, Hab. 3. 16. whether when he is beset with contentions, and has wounds without cause, *he have not tarried long at the wine*; when he has lost his friend, whether he have not by some *treacherous wound*, Eccl. 22. 22. forced him to depart: or when he lies under infamy, whether it be not only the Eccho of his own scandalous crimes? If he find it thus with him, certainly his mouth is stop'd, and cannot without the most disingenuous impudence complain of any but himself. He could not be ignorant that such effects do naturally attend such causes, and therefore if he would take the one, he must take the other also. No man sure can be so mad, as to think God should work such miracles (disunite those things which nature has conjoyn'd) only that he may sin at ease, have all the bestial pleasures he can project, and none of the consequent smart. We read indeed God divided the sea, but it was to make *the way for the ransom'd of the Lord to pass over*, Isai. 15. 10. those who were his own people, and went in at his command; but when they were secured, we find the waters immediately returned to their channel, and overwhelm'd the Egyptians, who ventured without the same warrant. And sure the case is alike here, when any man can produce God's mandate for him to run into all excess of riot, to desecrate the temple of the Holy Ghost, *and make his body the member of an harlot*, 1 Cor. 6. 15. in a word when God bids him do any of those things, which God and good men abhor, then and not before he may hope he may sever such acts from their native penal effects; for till then (how profuse soever some Legendary stories represent him) he will certainly never so bestow his miracles.

Men are so impious to murmur because they have not materials to be wicked enough.

12. But I fear upon scrutiny there will appear a yet farther circumstance upon which to arraign our mutinies: for though it be unreasonable enough to charge God with the ill effects of our own lewdness, yet 'tis a higher step to murmur because we have not materials to be wicked enough. And this I fear is the case with too many of us, who though they are not so despoil'd by their sins, but that they

can

can keep up their round of vicious pleasures, yet are discontented because they think some others have them more exquisite, think their vices are not Genteel enough, unless they be very expensive, and are covetous only that they may be more Luxurious. These are such as St. *James* speaks of, *who ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts*, James 4. 3. and sure to be mutinous on this account is one of the highest pieces of frenzy. Would any man in his wits tell another he will cut his throat, and then expect he should furnish him with a knife for it? And yet to this amount our murmurs against God, for his not giving us those things wherewith we only design to wage war with him. For surely if the discontents of mankind were closely inspected, I doubt a great many would be found of this kind. It concerns the Reader therefore to make the inquisition in his own breast, both in this and all the former particulars; and I doubt not, if he do it with any ingenuity and uprightness, he will be abundantly convinc'd that for his few mites of obedience he pays to God, he receives talents of mercies (even temporal) from him: and that on the other side, that God as much under pays his sins, as he over pays his services: by which God do's sufficiently attest how little he delights in our affliction, how gladly he takes any light occasion of caressing and cherishing, and overskips those of punishing us. Which sure ought to make us convert all our displeasures against our sins, which extort those acts of severity from him, to which his nature is most averse. And here indeed our resentments cannot be too sharp, but towards God our fittest address will be in the penitential form of the Prophet Daniel: *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, but to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him*, Dan. 9. 8, 9. And as his justice is to be revered in his inflictions, so is his wisdom also, in so disposing of events to particular persons, as may best consist with the universal œconomy and managery of the World, the consideration whereof is the design of the next Section.

SECT. VI.

Of Gods general Providence.

1. WHEN God made the universe, he intended not only to glorify himself in one transient act of his power, and then leave this great and wonderful production of his, as the *Ostrich her eggs* in the wilderness, *Lam.* 4. 3. but having drawn it out of its first Chaos, he secur'd it from returning thither again, by establishing as a due symmetry of parts, so also a regular order of motion. Hence it is that the heavens have their constant revolutions, the earth its succession of determinate seasons, animals their eternal course of generation and corruption: and by this wise œconomy, the world after so many thousand years, seems still in its spring and first beauty. But it had been in vain to have thus secured the defection of the creatures, if man for, whose sake they were made, had been excluded from this care. His faculty of reason would have made him but the more fatal instrument of confusion, and taught him the more compendious ways of disturbing the world. *Job* compares him *to the wild asses colt*, Job 11. 12. which takes its range without adverting to any thing of the common good. God has therefore doubly hedged in this unruly creature, made a fence of laws about him (both natural and positive) and besides has taken him into the common circle of his Providence, so that he, as well as the rest of the creation, has his particular station assign'd him, and that not only in reference to other creatures, but himself; has put a difference between one man and other, ordained several ranks and Classes of men, and endowed them with special and appropriate qualifications for those stations wherein he has set them.

Providence which extends to all parts of the creation, is peculiarly careful of men.

2. This, as it is a work of infinite wisdom in God, so it is of unspeakable advantage to men. Without this regular disposure, the world would have been in the same confusion which we read of in the host of the *Midianites*, *every mans sword against his fellow*, Judg. 7. 22. Nothing but force could determine who should do, or enjoy any thing; and even that decision also would have been repealable by a greater force: so that we have all reason to confess the utility of that order God has set among men: and even he that bears the lowest and most despicable place in it, is

This overruling power is of unspeakable advantage to mankind.

certainly infinitely more happy by contributing to that general Harmony, than he could be in any state of discord.

A due consideration whereof silences all complaints.

3. Were this now well consider'd, methinks it should silence all our complaints, and men should not be so vehemently concern'd in what part of the structure it pleases the great Architect to put them, for every man is to look on himself only as a small parcel of those materials which God is to put into form. Every stone is not fit for the corner, nor every little rafter for the main beam: the wisdom of the Master builder is alone to determine that. And sure there cannot be a more vile contempt of the Divine wisdom than to dispute his choice. Had God wisdom enough to contrive this vast and beautiful fabrick, and may he not be trusted with one of us poor worms? Did he by his *wisdom make the heavens, and by his understanding stretch out the clouds*, Prov. 3. 19. and shall he not know where to place a little lump of figur'd earth? This is certainly the most absurd distrust imaginable, and yet this is really the true meaning of our repining at the condition he has placed us in.

'Tis most unreasonable to expect that the scheme of Providence should be modell'd by our humor.

4. The truth is, we are so full of our selves, that we can see nothing beyond it: every man expects God should place him where he has a mind to be, though by it he discompose the whole scheme of his Providence. But though we are so senselesly partial, yet God is not so: he that comprehends at once the whole concern of mankind, applies himself to the accommodating those, not the humoring any particular person. *He has made the great and small, and careth for all alike*, Wisd. 6. 7. He is the common Father of mankind, and disposes things for the publick advantage of this great Family, and 'tis not all the impatient cravings of a froward child that shall make him recede from his designed method. We are apt enough, I am sure, to tax it not only as a weakness, but injustice too in a Prince, when he indulges any thing to a private Favorite to the publick disadvantage; yet so unequal we are, that we murmur at God for not doing that, which we murmur at men for doing.

Other men have the same appetites with us, and cannot be satisfied but by our disappointment.

5. Besides a man is to consider, that other men have the same appetites with himself. If he dislike an inferiour state, why should he not think others do so too? And then as the Wise man speaks, *whose voice shall the Lord hear?* Ecclus 34. 24. 'Tis sure great insolence in me to expect that God should be more concern'd to humor me, than those multitudes of others who have the same desires. And the more impatient my longings are, the less in reason should be my hopes; for mutiny is no such endearing quality as to render any man a dearling to God. But if all men should have equal satisfaction, we should puzzle even Omnipotence it self. Every man would be above and superiour: yet those are comparative terms, and if no man were below, no man could be above. So in wealth, most men desire more, but every man do's at least desire to keep what he has; how then shall one part of the world be supplied without the diminution of the other, unless there should be as miraculous a multiplication of treasure for mens avarice, as there was of Loaves for their hunger, *Matt.* 16. 9. It was a good answer which the Ambassadors of an opprest Province made to *Antony*; If, O Emperor, thou wilt have double taxes from us, thou must help us to double Springs and Harvests. And sure God must be at the expence of a new Creation, make us a double world, if he should oblige himself to satisfy all the unreasonable appetites of men: and if he satisfy not all, why should any particular person look that his alone should be indulged to?

Self-love is the source of most of our complaints.

6. Yet as unreasonable as it is, the most of us do betray such a perswasion. No man is discontented that there are lower, as well as higher degrees in the world, that there are poor as well as rich, but all sensible men assent to the fitness of it: yet if themselves happen to be set in the lower form, they exclame as if the whole order of the world were subverted; which is a palpable indication that they think that Providence which governs others, should serve them, and distribute to them not what it, but themselves think good. This immoderate Self-love is the Spring and root of most of our complaints, makes us such unequal judges in our own concerns, and prompts us to put in Caveats and exceptions in our own behalf, as *David* did on his Son's, *See that thou hurt not the young man Absalom*, 2 Sam. 18. 15. as if God were to manage the government of the world with a particular regard to our liking, and were like the Angels at *Sodom*, Gen. 19. 22. to *do nothing till we had got into Zoar*, had all our demands secured to us.

We have in us the worst part of the Leveller's principle, impatient to see any above us.

7. It would indeed astonish a considering man to see, that although the concerns of men are all disposed by an unerring Wisdom, and acknowledged by themselves to be so, yet that scarce any man is pleased. The truth is, we have generally in us the worser part of the Levellers principle, and though we can very contentedly behold

behold multitudes below us, yet are impatient to see any above us; not only the *foot* (to use the Apostle's simile) *complains that it is not the hand, but the ear because it is not the eye*, 1 Cor. 12. 15, 16. Not only the lowermost, but the higher ranks of men are uneasy, if there be any one step above them. Nay so importunate is this aspiring humor, that we see men are forc'd to feed it though but with air and shadows. He that cannot make any real advance in his quality, will yet do it in effigie, in all little gayeties and pageantries of it. Every degree in these respects not only emulates, but imitates its superiour, till at last by that impatience of their proper distance they make it greater, and sink even below their first state by their ridiculous profusion. Indeed the world seems to be so over-run with this vanity, that there is little visible distinction of degrees, and one had need go to the Heralds office to know mens Qualities, for neither their habit nor equipage do now adays inform us with any certainty.

And consider only our own humor or convenience, and not the publick interest.

8. But by all these it appears that men look on themselves only as single persons, without reference to the community whereof they are members. For did they consider that, they would endeavour rather to become the places wherein they were set, by doing the duties belonging to them, than be perpetually projecting for a change. A tree that is every year transplanted will never bear fruit; and a mind that is always hurried from its proper station, will scarce ever do good in any. This is excellently exprest to us by *Solomon*, *As a bird that wandereth from his nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place*, Prov. 27. 8. 'Tis easy to divine the fate of those young ones from whom the dam wanders, and 'tis as easy to guess how the duties of that place will be performed, whose owner is always upon the wing and making towards another. I wish we had not too costly experiments both in Church and State of the truth of this observation. Alas we forget that we are all servants to the same Master, and that he is to appoint in what office we shall serve him. How should we like it in any of our own families, to have an inferiour officer leave his work undone, because he has more mind to be Major-Domo? Yet this insolence we every day repeat towards God, sullenly dispute his orders, and unless we may chuse our own employments, will do nothing.

The restraint put upon ambitious spirits, is a great instance of providence.

9. 'Tis evident this perverse temper of mankind breeds a great deal of mischief and disturbance in the world, but would breed arrant confusion and subversion, if it were suffer'd to have its full range. If God permit but one ambitious spirit to break loose in an age as the instrument of his wrath, what destruction do's it often times make? How do's it *cause the whole earth to tremble, and shake kingdoms*, as is said of *Nebuchadnezzar*, Isai. 14. 16. and may be said of many others of those wholesale robbers who have dignified the trade? But if every aspiring humor should be as prosperous, where would it find fuel to maintain the flame? No doubt every age produces men of as unbounded desires as *Alexander* or *Cæsar*, but God gives them not the same opportunities to trouble the world. And accordingly in the more petty ambitions of private men he often orders it so, that those soaring minds can find no benign gale to help their mounting. He that sets bounds to the sea, saying, *hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and though the waves thereof do toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over*, Jer. 5. 22. do's also depress the swelling pride of men, hangs clogs and weights upon them that they cannot rise to their affected height. For though we are all willing to forget it, yet God remembers that he is the Rector of the Universe, and will assert his Dominion. The subtilest contrivance cannot circumvent him, the most daring pretender cannot wrest any thing out of his hand; the *Lord will still be King, be the people never so impatient*, Psal. 99. 1. 'Twill therefore sure be as well our prudence as our duty to *be still, and know that he is God*, Psal. 46. 10. with an humble dereliction of our own wills acquiesce in his, and not by ineffective struglings provoke, whom we are sure never to subdue. We may like unmanaged horses fome and fret, but still God has the bridle in our jaws, and we cannot advance a step farther than he permits us. Why should we then create torment to our selves by our repinings, which only sets us farther from our aims? Tis God's declared method to exalt the lowly, and 'tis observable in the first two Kings of *Israel*, who were of Gods immediate election, that he surprised them with that dignity when they were about mean and humble employments, the one searching his father's Ass, the other keeping his father's Sheep: and would men honestly and diligently exercise themselves in the business of their proper calling, they might perhaps find it a more direct road to advancement, than all the sinister arts by which ambitious men endeavour to climb. *Solomon* sets it down as an Aphorism, *seest thou a man diligent in his business,*

he shall stand before Kings, he shall not stand before mean men, Prov. 22. 29. But whether it happen to have that effect or no, it will have a better; for it will sweeten his present condition, divert his mind from mutinous reflections on other mens height, and his own lowness; for 'tis commonly men who mind not their work that are at so much leisure to gaze. He that carefully plies his own business, will have his thoughts more concentred. And doubtless 'tis no small happiness to have them so, for 'tis their gadding too much abroad, looking on other mens conditions, that sends them back (like *Dinah* deflowred) to put all in an uproar at home. The son of *Syrach* speaks with transportation of the state even of him that labours and is content, and calls it *a sweet life*, Ecclus 40. 18. And certainly 'tis infinitely more so than that of the greatest Prince whose mind swells beyond his territories.

No man's station is so obscure as to hide him from the eyes of God.

10. Upon all these considerations it cannot but appear very reasonable that we should leave God to govern the world, not be putting in like the sons of *Zebedee* for the highest seats; but contentedly rest our selves where he has placed us, till his providence (not our own designs) advance us. We can no where be so obscure as to be hid from his eyes: who as he valued the widow's mite above the great oblations of the rich, so he will no less graciously accept the humble endeavours of the mean, than the more eminent services of the mighty; himself having declared, that he accepts *according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*, 2 Cor. 8. 12. So that in what rank soever a man is set, he has still the same opportunity of approving himself to God: and though in the eye of the world he be a vessel of dishonour, yet in the day when God comes to *make up his Jewels*, Mal. 3. 17. there will be another estimate made of him who regularly moves in his own sphere. And sure he that sits down in this acquiescence is a happier man, than he that enjoys the greatest wordly splendour: but infinitely more so than he who impatiently covets but cannot attain them; for such a man puts himself upon a perpetual rack, keeps his appetites up at the uttermost stretch, and yet has nothing wherewith to satisfy them. Let therefore our ease, if not our duty, prompt us to acquiescence, and a ready submission to God's disposals, to which we have yet a farther inducement from that distinct care he hath over every man's peculiar, by which he proportions to him what is really best for him; of which we are farther to consider in the next Section.

SECT. VII.

Of Gods particular Providence.

'Tis the imperfection of our nature, that we cannot attend at once to several things.

1. IT is the imperfection of our finite nature that we cannot at once attend to divers things, but the more vehement our intention is upon one, the greater is our neglect of the rest. But God's infinity cannot be so bounded; his eyes at once see, and his Providence at once orders all the most distant and disparate things in the world. He is not such an Epicurean Deity, as to sequester himself wholly to the enjoyment of his own felicity, and to despise the concerns of poor mortals; but though he have his *dwelling so high, yet he humbleth himself to behold the things in heaven and earth*, Psal. 113. 5. Nor do's his Providence confine it self to the more splendid and greater parts of managery, the conduct of Empires and States, but it descends to the lowest parts of his Creation, to the *fowls* of the air, to the *lilies* of the field, and then sure our Saviour's inference as to mankind is irrefragable, *Are ye not much better than they?* Matt. 6. 26. If a sparrow (as he elsewhere tells his disciples) cannot fall to the ground without God's particular notice, surely no human creature is less considerable to him: nay if our very hairs are numbred, we cannot think the excrescence is of more value than the stock, but must conclude that God with a particular advertence watches over the concerns of every man.

God is infinitely good, as well as omniscient.

2. Now God being infinitely good, cannot thus attend us upon any insidious design of doing us mischief: he watches over us as a guardian, not as a spy; and directs his observation to the more seasonable adapting his benefits. And as he is thus gracious in designing our advantage, so he is no less wise in contriving it. *All things*, says the Wise man, *are not profitable for all men*, Ecclus 37. 28. Indeed nothing

thing is absolutely good but God: all created things are good or ill in reference to that to which they are applied. Meat is good, but to a surfeited stomach 'tis not only nauseous but dangerous. Fire is good, but if put in our bosoms, not only burns our cloaths but flesh. And as human wisdom directs the right application of these and the like, so the supreme and divine orders events according to the disposition of the person concern'd; *he knows our frame*, Psal. 103. 14. and discerns what operation such or such things will have upon us, while we who know neither our selves nor them, can make but random guesses, and worse choices. And sure he that do's but thus in general acknowledge God's providence, goodness and wisdom (which he is no Christian who do's not) has a sufficient amulet against all his sollicitudes, much more his repinings. He cannot think he suffers unawars to him who sees all things. He cannot think his sufferings are design'd for ill to him, because they are dispos'd by him who intends and projects his good. Nor can he fear those intentions can miscarry, which are guided by an infinite and unerring wisdom, and back'd by an uncontrolable power. And sure this is as the Apostle speaks, *Heb.* 6. 18. *strong consolation*, if we would but duely apply it.

Our afflictions are either privative or positive.

3. Yet because general notions do often make but light impressions on us, it may not be amiss to make a little more inspection, and to observe how applicable they are to the several kinds of our discontents. Now those may be reduced to too: for either we are troubled at the want of something we desire, or the suffering of something we would avert: so that the two notions of privative and positive divide between them all our affliction.

The privative is most unbounded.

4. The first of these is usually the most comprehensive, for there are few who have not more torment from the apprehension of somewhat they want, than from the smart of any thing they feel. And indeed whilst our desires are so vagrant and exorbitant, they will be sure to furnish matter enough for our discontents. But certainly there is not in the world such a charm for them, as the consideration that God is more wise to discern, and more careful to provide what is really good for us than we our selves. We poor purblind creatures look only on the surface of things, and if we see a beautiful appearance, somewhat that invites our senses, we court it with the utmost earnestness; but God penetrates deeper, he sees to the bottom both of us and those things we desire, and finds often that though they may please our appetite, they will hurt our health: and will no more give them to us, than a careful Father will to his Child those guilded poisons he cries for. Perhaps this man is taken with the enchanted musick of Fame, likes not his own obscure station, but would fain present himself upon a more publick Theater, come into the eye and crowd of the world; but how little do's he know how he shall act his part there: whether he shall come off with a plaudit or a hiss? He may render himself but the more publick spectacle of scorn; or if he do not that he may by a better success feed up his vain glory to such a bulk, as may render him too great a weight for that tottering pinnacle whereon it stands: and so after he has made a towring circle, he may fall back with more ignominy to his first point. Another it may be no less eagerly desires wealth, thinks (as once *Crœsus* did) that he that abounds in treasure, cannot be empty of felicity; but alas how knows he how he shall employ it? There are two contrary temptations that attend riches; riots, and covetousness: and he is sure a little too confident, that dares promise himself that when there is such odds against him, he shall certainly chuse the one just mean: and if he do not, he do's only inflame his account at the great Audit. Besides the more wealth he has, the fairer booty he is to the avarice of others; and it has been often seen, that many a man had not died so poor, if he had lived less rich. Another perhaps thinks not himself so much to want wealth as children to heir it, and complains with *Abraham*, *Lord, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless*? Gen. 15. 2. yet how knows he whether that child he so much desires *shall be a wise man or a fool*, Eccles. 2. 19. a comfort or a vexation to himself if he live to see his proof? and if he do not, he do's but project for an access to his dying cares in what hands to leave him. *Rachel* sollicited this satisfaction with the greatest impatience, *give me children or I die*, Gen. 30. 1. and 'tis observable that the grant of her wish proved the loss of her life.

We generally make our selves miserable for want of those things whose possession would make us miserable.

5. Thus in these and innumerable other instances we drive on blindfold, and very often impetuously pursue that which would ruin us, and were God as short sighted as we, into what precipices should we minutely hurry our selves? or were he so unkind as to consider our importunity more than our interest, we should quickly sink under the weight of our own wishes; and as *Juvenal* in his tenth Satyr excellently observes, perish by the success and grant of our prayers. I suppose there is no man

that soberly recollects the events of his life, but can experimentally say, he has sometimes desired things which would have been to his mischief if he had had them, and that himself has after look'd on the denial as a mercy: as on the other side when he has prosper'd in his aims, and had what his soul lusted after, it has been but like the quails of the *Israelites*, a conviction and punishment, rather than a satisfaction. And now surely God may complain of us as he did of *Israel*, *How long will it be e're you believe me?* Num. 14. 11. After all the attestations he has given of his care and Providence over us, after all the experiments we have had of the folly of our own elections, we cannot yet be brought either to distrust our selves, or rely upon him. We will still be chusing, and look on him as no farther concern'd, than as the executioner of our designs.

We have a deference to every One beside Almighty God.

6. This is certainly a strange preverseness, and such as no sensible man would be guilty of in any other instance. In all our secular affairs we trust those whom we have cause to think understand them better than our selves, and rely upon men in their own faculty. We put our estates in the Lawyers hand, our bodies into the Physician's, and submit to their advice though it be against our humor, meerly because we account them more competent judges. Yet this deference we cannot be perswaded to pay to God, but will still be prescribing to him, and are very angry if his dispensations do not exactly answer our fancies. And can we offer him a greater affront than thus to distrust him? What is it but interpretatively to deny either his wisdom, or his goodness, or both? and so derogate from him in two of his essential attributes. For there can be no rational account given by any who believe those, why they should not remit their whole concerns to him. So that the short account is, that in our distrusts we either deny him to be a God, or our selves to be men, by resisting the most evident dictates of that reason which distinguishes us from brutes. For certainly there is not in human discourse a more irrefragable Maxim, than that we ought for our own sakes to resign our selves to him, who we are infallibly sure, can, and will chuse better for us, than we for our selves.

The light of nature taught Socrates to pray that God would give what he saw fit.

7. This was so apparent by meer natural light, that *Socrates* advised men to pray only for blessings in general, and leave the particular kinds of them to God's election, who best knows what is good for us. And sure this is such a piece of Divinity, as extremely reproaches us Christians, who cannot match a Heathen in his implicite faith to God. Nay indeed 'tis the vilest defamation upon God himself, that we who pretend to know him more, should trust him less. So that we see our repinings do not terminate in their own proper guilt, but do in their consequences swell higher, and our discontents propagate themselves into Blasphemy. For while we impatiently complain of our wants, we do tacitly tax God to want either that wisdom, power, or love, whereby he should supply us. And sure he must be very Atheistical to whom this will not give a competent prejudice against this sin.

Our positive afflictions are embitter'd by our selves.

8. And this very consideration will equally prejudge the other branch of our discontents, I mean those which repine at the ills we suffer. And not only our privative, but our positive afflictions may by it have their bitterness taken off: for the same goodness and wisdom which denies those things we like, because they are hurtful for us, do's upon the very same reason give us those distastful things which he sees profitable. A wise Physician do's not only diet, but if occasion be, purge his patient also. And surely there is not such a purifier, such a cleanser of the soul as are afflictions, if we do not (like disorderly patients) frustrate their efficacy by the irregular managery of our selves under them.

Sect. VIII.

Of the Advantage of Afflictions.

The most general and obvious advantage of affliction, is its awakening to repentance.

1. It were the work of a volume to give an exact and minute account of the benefit of Afflictions. I shall only point at some of the more general and obvious. And first it is one of the most awakening calls to Repentance, and to this end it is that God most usually designs it. We see the whole scene of it, *Hos.* 5. 15. *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early*: and in the very next

verse

verse we find this voice of God ecchoed forth by a penitential note, *Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.* Thus we find the Brethren of *Joseph*, though there had a long interval passed betwixt their barbarous usage of him, and his feigned rigour to them, yet when they saw themselves distress'd by the one, then they begin to recollect the other, saying; *We are verily guilty concerning our brother*, Gen. 42. 21. Prosperity is an intoxicating thing, and there are few brains strong enough to bear it; it lays us asleep, and amuses us with pleasant dreams, whilst in the mean time *Satan* rifles our treasures, and spoiles us by the deceitful charms of sin, of our innocency and real happiness. And can there be a more friendly office done for a man in this condition, than to rouze him, and bring him to apprehend the designs that are laid against him? And this is the errand on which afflictions are sent: so that we have reason to look on them as our friends and confederates that intend our rescue, and to take the alarm they give us, and diligently seek out those intestine enemies of which they warn us. And he that instead of this quarrels at their interposing, thinks them his *enemies because they tell him the truth*, Gal. 4. 6. do's miserably pervert *the counsel of God against himself*, Luke 7. 30. and may at last, verify his own jealousies; and by so provoking an ingratitude, convert those into the wounds of an enemy, which were originally meant as the corrections of a Father.

Therefore they bear the image and impress of the guilts they are to chastise.

2. And as afflictions do thus in general admonish us of sins, so it pleases God most frequently so to model and frame them, that they bear the very image and impress of those particular guilts they are to chastise, and are the dark shadows that attend our gay delights, or flagrant insolencies. The wise man observes that the turning the Egyptian waters into blood, was a manifest reproof of that cruel commandment for the murdering of the Hebrew infants, *Wisd.* 12. 5. And surely we might in most if not all our sufferings, see some such corresponding circumstances, as may lead us to the immediate provoking cause of it. God who do's all things in number, weight, and measure, do's in punishments also observe a symmetry and proportion, and adapts them not only to the heinousness, but even the very specifick kind of our crimes. The only fixt immutable rule he has given for his Vice-gerents on earth to punish by, is that in the case of murder, which is we see grounded on this rule of proportion, *He that sheddeth mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, Gen. 9. 6. And though he hath now rescinded the inferiour retaliations of the *eye for the eye, the tooth for the tooth*, Exod. 21. 24. (probably for the hardness of our hearts, because he saw our revengful natures would be too much pleased with it) yet he has not precluded himself from acting by those measures, but we see he do's very often signally make men feel the smart of those violences or injustices they have used to others. Of this Sacred story affords several examples (as *Adonibezek*, Judg. 1. 6. and *Ahab*, 1 King. 21. 19.) and profane many more, and daily experience and observation most of all. And though this method of retaliation is not always so evident and apparent to the world, because mens sins are not always so, yet I believe if men would duly recollect, it would be for the most part discernable to their own consciences, and they would apparently see, that their calamities did but trace the footsteps of their sins.

It is of exceeding great importance to be taught, what is the sin that God has a controversy with us for.

3. Now if we rightly weigh this, we cannot but think it a very advantageous circumstance. We are naturally blind when we look inward, and if we have not some adventitious light to clear the object, will be very apt to overlook it. Therefore since the end of all our afflictions is our repentance, it is a wise and gracious disposal, that they do thus point to us those particular sins of which we are to repent. The body of sin will not be destroy'd in the whole entire bulk, but must be dismembred, pull'd to pieces limb by limb. He that attacks it otherwise, will be like *Sertorius*'s souldier, who ineffectively tugg'd at the horses tail to get it off at once, when he that pull'd it hair by hair, quickly did it. Therefore as it is a great part of our spiritual Wisdom to know in what especial parts the *Sampson*-like strength of our corruptions lie, so it is a great instance of God's care of us, thus by his corrections to discipline and instruct us in it.

If the estate be impoverish'd, to consider how it was gain'd, or employ'd; if the body be afflicted, to inquire if it be not the effect of intemperance; if the name be invaded, to reflect whether the shame be not deserv'd, &c.

4. In all our afflictions therefore it is our concern, nicely and critically to observe them. I mean not to enhance our murmurs and complaints, but to learn by them what is Gods peculiar controversy against us. This is indeed *to hear the rod, and who hath appointed it*, Mich. 6. 9. Let him therefore that suffers in any of his concerns, examine whether he hath not some corresponing guilt which answers to it, *as face answers face*, Prov. 27. 19. He that is impoverished in his Estate, let him consider first how he acquired it, whether there were not something of fraud or in-

justice, which like a cancerous humor, mixt in its very elements and constitution, and eat out its bowels: or whether some sacrilegious prize, some coal from the altar have not fired his nest. Or if nothing can be charged upon the acquest, let him consider how he has used it; whether he hath not made it the fuel of his lusts, in riot and excesses, or the object of his adoration in an inordinate value of it. In like manner he who is afflicted in his Body, groans under the torment of some grievous disease, may very seasonably interrogate himself, whether it have not been contracted by his vice, whether *his bones be not* (in a more literal sense than *Job* meant it) *full of the sins of his youth*, Job 20. 11. and his surfeiting and drunkenness be not the cause, *that his soul*, as the Psalmist speaks, *abhors all manner of meat, and is even hard at deaths door*, Psal. 107. 18. or at least whether the not employing his health and strength to those purposes for which 'twas given, is not the reason of its being withdrawn. He also that is invaded in his Reputation, that lies under some great infamy, is to consider whether it be not deserv'd; whether some part if not the whole guilt of which he is accused, stick not to him: or if he be clear in that particular instance, whether some concealed sin of his would not if it were known, incur as great scandal: for in that case he has in right forfeited his reputation, and God may make the seizure as well by an unjust, as a just accusation. Or if his heart accuse him not here, yet let him farther reflect, whether his vain-glorious pursuits of praise and high conceits of himself, have not made this an apt and necessary humiliation for him. Or lastly let him recollect how he has behaved himself towards others in this kind: whether he hath had a just tenderness of his neighbours fame, or hath not rather exposed and prostituted it. In these and many other instances such a particular scrutiny, would (in all probability) discover the affinity and cognation between our guilts and our punishments, and by marking out the spring and fountain head, direct us how to stop or divert the current. And he that would diligently employ himself in this inquisition, would find little leisure and less cause to condole his afflictions, but would divert all his complaints upon himself, *accept of the punishment of his iniquity, and thank the Lord for thus giving him warning*, Psal. 16. 8.

Afflictions benefit us by weaning us from the world.

5. A second benefit which God designs us in our afflictions is the weaning us from the world, to disentangle us from its fetters and charms, and draw us to himself. We read in the story of the *Deluge*, that so long as the earth was covered with waters, the very *Raven* was contented to take shelter in the Ark, but when all was fair and dry, even the *Dove* finally forsook it, *Gen.* 8. 12. And 'tis much so with us: the worst of men will commonly in distresses have recourse to God (the very heathen mariners in a storm could rebuke *Jonah* for not calling upon his God, *Jon.* 1. 6.) when yet the very best of us, are apt to forget him amidst the blandishments and insinuations of prosperity. The kind aspects of the world are very enchanting, apt to inveigle and besot us, and therefore it is Gods care over us, to let us sometimes see her more averting countenance in her frowns and storms; that, as children frighted by some ugly appearance, we may run into the arms of our father. Alas were all things exactly fitted to our humors here, when should we think of a remove? and had not death some harbingers to prepare us for him, what a surprising guest would he be to us? 'Tis storied of *Antigonus*, that seeing a souldier in his camp of so daring a courage, that he always courted the most hazardous attempts, and observing him also of a very infirm sickly habit, he took a particular care of him, and by medicines and good attendance recovered him; which no sooner he had done, but the man grew more cautious, and would no longer expose himself as formerly; and gave this reason for it, that now he was healthy, his life was of some value to him, and not to be hazarded at the same rate, as when it was only a burden: and should God cure all our complaints, render us perfectly at ease, I fear too many of us would be of the souldiers mind, think our lives too good to resign to him, much more to hazard for him, as our Christianity in many cases obliges us. The son of *Syrach* observes how *dreadful death is to a man that is at rest in his possessions, that hath abundance of all things, and hath nothing to vex him*: nay he descends much lower; and puts in him *who is yet able to receive meat*, Ecclus 14. 1. The truth is we do so passionately dote upon the world, that like besotted lovers, we can bear a great deal of ill usage, before we quit our pursuit. Any little slight favour atones us after multiplied affronts, and we must be disciplined by repeated disappointments, e're we can withdraw our confidence. But how fatally secure should we be, if God should permit this Syren always to entertain us with her musick, and should not by some discordant grating notes interrupt our raptures, and recall us to sober thoughts.

6. In

6. Indeed 'tis one of the highest instances of God's love, and of his clemency also, thus to project our reducement. We were all in our Baptism affianc'd to him, with a particular abrenunciation of the world, so that we cannot without the greatest disloyality cast our selves into its embraces; and yet when we have thus *broken the covenant of God*, Prov. 2. 17. he do's not pursue us with a jealous rage, with the severity which an abused rival'd kindness would suggest; doth not give us a bill of divorce and disclame his relation; but contrives how he may reclaim and bring us back to himself. The transcendency of this lenity God excellently describes by the Prophet in the case of *Israel, They say if a man put away his wife, and she become another man's, shall he return unto her again? but thou hast play'd the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me saith the Lord*, Jer. 3. 1. And this though a great height of indulgence, is no more than he daily repeats to us. After we have basely adulterated with the world, converted our affections from God to it, he do's not give us over, abandon us to our leud course, and consequent ruin, but still invites our return; and lest that may not serve, he do's with a great deal of holy artifice essay to break that accursed League into which we are enter'd, pulls off the disguise in which the world courted us, and makes us see it as it is in it self, a scene of *vanity and vexation of spirit*, Eccles. 1. 14.

This vouchsafement is so much the greater, in that the love of the world was a violation of the baptismal vow

7. And as he do's this in general, so also by a particular application to those temporal satisfactions wherewith we were most transported; the things to which we are more indifferent do not so much endanger us, 'tis those upon which we have more vehemently set our hearts which become our snares, and awake his jealousy; and accordingly we frequently see that 'tis in those he chuses to cross us. How often do's it happen that those which are enamoured of themselves, dote upon their own features, do meet with some disease or accident which blasts their beauty, withers that fair flower, and makes their winter overtake their spring? So in our friends and relations 'tis usually seen, we soonest lose those for whom we have the greatest, the most immoderate passion. If there be one fondling among our children, 'tis odds but that is taken away, or made as much the object of our grief and sorrow, as ever it was of our joy and love. When God sees our hearts so excessively cleave to any transitory thing, he knows 'tis necessary to sever them: for whilst we have such clogs upon us, *our souls will cleave to the dust*, Psal. 119. 1. will not be able to soar up to the higher region for which they are design'd.

'Tis observable those things are generally soonest taken away which men are most fond of.

8. In a word, God so loves us, that he removes what ever he sees will obstruct that intimate union which he desires with us: and sure this is so obliging, that though he should bid us to our loss, though he could not recompence us for what he takes from us, yet we must be very ill natur'd if we can be angry at so much kindness. But when to this is added that all this is principally, nay solely design'd for our advantage, that God takes from us all these empty delusory contentments meerly that he may instate us in solid and durable joys; we betray as much ignorance of our interest, as insensibleness of our obligation, if we repine that God makes us so much his care. 'Tis true indeed, the things to which we have so inordinately adhered, do stick so close, that they cannot be pull'd away without some pain: yet for our corporal security we can endure the sundring of parts that do not only cleave, but grow to us. He that has a gangren'd member suffers it to be cut off to save his whole body; and do's not revile, but thank and reward the Chirurgion. Yet where our souls are concern'd, and where the things have no native union with us, but are only cemented by our passions, we are impatient of the method, and think God deals very hardly with us, not to let us perish with what we love. The sum of all is this, God though he be abundantly condescending, yet he will never stoop so low as to share his interest with us in the world: if we will devote our selves to it, 'tis not all our empty forms of service will satisfy him: if he cannot divorce our hearts from it, he will divorce himself eternally from us. And the case being thus, we are sure very ill advised if we do not contentedly resign our selves to his methods, and chearfully endure them how sharp soever. The only expedient we have for our own ease, is to shorten the cure by giving our assistance, and not by struglings to render it more difficult and painful. Let us entirely surrender our wills to him, and when we have done that, we may without much pain let him take any thing else. But the more difficult we find it to be disentangled from the world, the greater should our caution be against all future engagements to it. If our escape hath been as the Apostle says, *so as by fire*, Jude 23. with much smart and hazard, let us at least have so much wit, as the common proverb allows children, and not again expose our selves: let us never glue our hearts to any external thing, but

And those are generally the most hurtful things.

let all the concerns of the world hang loose about us; by that means we shall be able to put them off insensibly when ever God calls for them, or perhaps we shall prevent his calling for them at all, it being for the most part our too close adhesion to them which prompts him to it.

Afflictions have a farther advantage, that they are a mark of adoption.

9. A third advantage of afflictions is, that it is a mark and signature of our adoption, a witness of our legitimation. *What son is he* (saith the Apostle) *whom the Father chastiseth not? but if ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons*, Heb. 12. 7, 8. *Jacob* clad his dearling *Joseph* in a party-coloured Coat, and God's favourites do here wear a Livery inter-woven with a mixture of dark and gloomy colours; their *long white robes* are laid up for them against they come to the *marriage of the Lamb*, Rev. 19. 7. Indeed we much mistake the design of Christianity, if we think it calls us to a condition of ease and security. It might suit well enough with the votaries of the Golden Calf, to *sit down to eat and drink, and rise up to play*, Exod. 32. 6. but the disciples of the crucified Saviour are train'd to another discipline; our profession enters us into a state of warfare: and accordingly our very Baptismal engagement runs all in military terms, and we are not only servants of Christ's family, but souldiers of his camp. Now we know in a war men must not expect to pass their time in ease and softness, but besides all the dangers and difficulties of the combate, have many other hardships to endure; hunger and thirst, heat and cold, hard lodgings and weary marches: and he that is too nice for those, will not long stick to his colours. And it is the same in our Spiritual warfare, many pressures and sufferings are annexed to it, and our passive valour is no less tried than our active. In respect of this it is that our Saviour admonishes his Proselytes to compute first the difficulties incident to their profession, and that he may not ensnare us by proposing too easy terms, he bids us reckon upon the worst, and tells us, that he *that forsakes not all that he hath, shall not be his disciple*, Luke 14. 26. and *that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts 14. 22. Indeed 'twere very absurd for us to expect easier conditions, when these are the same to which our Leader has submitted, the *Captain of our Salvation was perfected by sufferings*, Heb. 2. 10. and if *it behoved Christ to suffer before he enter'd into his glory*, Luke 24. 46. it were insolent madness for us to look to be carried thither upon our beds of Ivory, or from the noise of our harps and viols, be immediately rapt into the Choire of Angels.

On this account pious men have still look'd upon prosperity with fear and jealousy.

10. This has been so much consider'd by pious men, that they have look'd upon their secular prosperities with fear and jealousy, and many have solemnly petition'd for crosses, as thinking them the necessary attestation of their sonship, and means of assimilation to their elder Brother. Why then should that which was so desirable to them, appear so formidable to us? or why should we so vehemently deprecate, what they so earnestly invited? If we indeed think it a privilege to be the Sons of God and fellow-heirs with Christ, why do we grudge at the condition? The *Roman* Captain tells St. *Paul* that he obtained the immunities of a *Roman with a great sum*, Acts 22. 28. and shall we expect so much a nobler and more advantageous adoption perfectly *gratis*, look that God should change his whole œconomy for our cause, give us an eternal inheritance discharged of those temporal incumbrances himself has annexed to it? This were sure as unjust a hope as it would be a vain one. When *David* had that ensnaring proposal made him of being the Kings son in law, 1 *Sam*. 18. 21. he set such a value upon the dignity, that he despised the difficulty of the condition: and sure we must have very low abject souls, if when so infinitely a higher advancement is sincerely offer'd us, we can suffer any apprehension of hardship to divert us. In a word let us remember that of the Apostle, *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him*, 2 Tim. 2. 12. And though our afflictions be in themselves not joyous but grievous, yet when they are consider'd as the earnest of our future inheritance, they put on another face, and may rather enamour than fright us.

Afflictions incite compassion.

11. A fourth advantage of afflictions is, that they excite our compassions towards others: there is nothing qualifies us so rightly to estimate the sufferings of others, as the having our selves felt them: without this our apprehensions of them are as dull and confused, as a blind man of colour, or a deaf man of sounds. They *that stretch themselves upon their couches, that eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall: that chant to the sound of the viol, drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, will not much be grieved with the afflictions of Joseph*, Amos 6. 4, 5, 6. Nay so necessary is our experience towards our commiseration, that we see 'twas thought a requisite accomplishment of our high Priest, (that highest example of unbounded compassion) and therefore saith the Apostle, *It behoved*

hoved him in all things to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, for in that he himself hath suffer'd being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted, Heb. 2. 17, 18. But if he whose meer sense of our miseries brought him down to us, chose this expedient to advance his pity, how necessary is it to our petrified bowels? And since God has assign'd our mercies to our brethren, as the standard by which he will proportion his to us, 'tis more ours than their advantage to have them enlarged: so that when by making us taste of their cup, acquainting us with the bitter relish of their sufferings, he prepares us to a Christian sympathy with them, 'tis but a remoter way of obliging and qualifying us for a more ample portion of his mercy. Nay besides the profit there is an honour accrues to us by it; compassion is one of the best properties of our nature, and we unman our selves when we put it off; nay more, 'tis an Attribute of the Divinity, and the more we advance in it, the closer approaches we make to him. And therefore we have all reason to bless him for that discipline by which he promotes us in so excellent, so necessary a grace.

Afflictions improve devotion.

12. A fifth benefit of afflictions, is that it is an improvement of devotion, sets us with more heartiness to our prayers. Whilst prosperity flows in upon us, we bathe our selves in its streams, but are very apt to forget its source; so that God is fain to stop the current, leave us dry and parched that our needs may make us do what our gratitude would not, trace our blessings up to the original spring, and both acknowledge and invoke him as the Author of all our good. This effect of afflictions is observ'd by the Prophet, *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastning was upon them,* Isa. 26. 16. And I believe I may appeal to every mans experience whether his prayers be not more frequent and more hearty too, when he is under some distress. Then how importunate are we in our petitions? how profuse in our vows and promises? saying with *Israel, Deliver us only, we pray thee, this day: and they put away the strange Gods from among them, and served the Lord,* Judg. 10. 15, 16. I confess 'tis no good indication of our temper that we need thus to be put in the press e're we will yield any thing, yet since we are so disingenuous, 'tis a mercy in God to adapt his methods to us; to extort when we will not give, and if he can have no free-will-offering, yet at least to exact his tribute. Nor do's he design the effect of this should cease with the calamity that rais'd it, but expects our compell'd addresses should bring us into the way of voluntary ones, and happily ensnare us into piety. And indeed herein are we worse than brutish if it do's not. We think it a barbarous rudeness to engage a man in our affairs, and as soon as we have served our own turns, never take farther notice of him. Nay indeed the very beasts may lecture us in this piece of Morality, many of them paying a signal gratitude where they have receiv'd, and shall we not come up at least to their pitch? shall not the endearment of our deliverance bring our Deliverer into some repute and consideration with us, and make us desire to keep up an acquaintance and entercourse with him? Yet if ingenuity work not with us, let interest at least prevail, and the remembrance how soon we may need him again, admonish us not to make our selves strangers to him. God complains of *Israel, wherefore say my people, we are Lords? we will come no more at thee,* Isa. 2. 31. A very insolent folly to renounce that dependance by which alone they subsisted, and no less will it be in any of us if we stop our recourse to him, because we have had advantage by it. We have no assurance that the same occasion shall not recur, but with what face can we then resume that entercourse which in the interval we despised? So that if we have but any ordinary providence, we shall still so celebrate past rescues as to continue in a capacity of begging more, and then we cannot but also confess the benefit of those first calamities which inspired our devotion, and taught us to pray in earnest, and will be ashamed that our thanks should be utter'd in a fainter accent than our petitions; or our daily spiritual concerns should be more coldly sollicited than our temporal accidental ones.

Afflictions improve Christian graces.

13. Nor is it only our devotion that is thus improved by our distresses, but many other Graces; our Faith, our Hope, our Patience, our Christian Sufferance and Fortitude. It is no triumph of Faith to trust God for those good things which he gives us in hand, this is rather to walk by sense than Faith: but to rely on him in the greatest destitution, *and against hope to believe in hope*; this is the Faith of a true child of *Abraham*, and will *be imputed* to us (as it was to him) *for righteousness,* Rom. 4. 22. So also our Patience owes all its opportunities of exercise to our afflictions, and consequently owes also a great part of its being to them; for we know desue-

tude will lose habits. What imaginable use is there of patience, where there is nothing to suffer? In our prosperous state, we may indeed employ our temperance, our humility, our caution; but patience seems then a useless vertue: nay indeed for ought we know may be counterfeit, till adversity bring it to the test. And yet this is the most glorious accomplishment of a Christian, that which most eminently conforms him to the Image of his Saviour, whose whole life was a perpetual exercise of this grace; and therefore we love our ease too well if we are unwilling to buy this pearl at any price.

Afflictions teach to be thankful both for past benefits, and even incumbent pressures.

14. Lastly our Thankfulness is (at least ought to be) increas'd by our distresses. 'Tis very natural for us to reflect with value and esteem upon those blessings we have lost, and we too often do it to aggravate our discontent: but sure the more rational use of it is to raise our thankfulness for the time wherein we enjoy them. Nay not only our former enjoyments, but even our present deprivations deserve our gratitude, if we consider the happy advantages we may reap from them. If we will perversly cast them away, that unworthy contempt pays no scores; for we still stand answerable in God's account for the good he design'd and we might have had by it, and we become liable to a new charge for our ingratitude in thus *despising the chastisement of the Lord*, Heb. 12. 5.

Secular misfortunes have been the passage to succeeding felicities.

15. And now if all these benefits of afflictions (which are yet but imperfectly recited) may be thought worth considering, it cannot but reconcile us to the sharpest of God's methods; unless we will own our selves such meer animals, as to have no other apprehensions than what our bodily senses convey to us; for sure he that has reason enough to understand that he has an immortal soul, cannot but assent that its interests should be serv'd, though with the displacency of his flesh. Yet even in regard of that our murmurings are oft very unjust; for we do many times ignorantly prejudge Gods design towards us even in temporals, who frequently makes a little transient uneasiness the passage to secular felicities. *Moses* when he fled out of *Egypt*, probably little thought that he should return thither a *God unto Pharaoh*, Exod. 4. 16. and as little did *Joseph* when he was brought thither a slave, that he was to be a Ruler there: yet as distant as those states were, the Divine Providence had so connected them, that the one depends upon the other. And certainly we may often observe the like over-ruling hand in our own distresses, that those events which we have entertained with the greatest regret, have in the consequences been very beneficial to us.

Be afflictions what they can be, they in some respect or other are design'd for good.

16. To conclude, we have certainly both from speculation and experience abundant matter to calm all our disquiets, to satisfy our distrusts, and to fix in us an entire resignation to God's disposals, who has designs which we cannot penetrate, but none which we need fear, unless we our selves pervert them. We have our Saviour's word for it, that *he will not give us a stone when we ask bread, nor a scorpion when we ask a fish*, Matt. 7. 9. Nay his love secures us yet farther from the errors of our own wild choice, and do's not give us those stones and scorpions which we importune for. Let us then leave our concerns to him who best knows them, and make it our sole care to entertain his dispensations with as much submission and duty, as he dispences them with love and wisdom. And if we can but do so, we may dare all the power of earth and hell too to make us miserable: for be our afflictions what they can, we are sure they are but what we in some respect or other need; be they privative or positive, the want of what we wish, or the suffering of what we wish not, they are the disposals of him who cannot err, and we shall finally have cause to say with the Psalmist, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted*, Psalm 119. 71.

Sect. IX.

Of our Misfortunes compar'd with other mens.

No man can reasonably think himself more unhappy than his neighbour.

1. WE come now to impress an equally just and useful Consideration, the comparing our misfortunes with those of other mens: and he that do's that, will certainly see so little cause to think himself singular, that he will not find himself superlative in calamity; for there is no man living that can with reason affirm himself to be the very unhappiest man,

there

there being innumerable diſtreſſes of others which he knows not of, and conſequently cannot bring them in balance with his own. A multitude of men there are whoſe perſons he knows not, and even of thoſe he do's, he may be much a ſtranger to their diſtreſſes; many ſorrows may lie at the heart of him who carries a ſmiling face, and many a man has been an object of envy to thoſe who look but on the ſurface of his ſtate, who yet to thoſe who know his private griefs, appears more worthy of compaſſion. And ſure this confuſed uncertain eſtimate of other mens afflictions, may divert us from all loud out-cries of our own. *Solon* ſeeing a friend much oppreſt with grief, carried him up to a Town that overlook'd the City of *Athens*, and ſhewing him all the buildings, ſaid to him, Conſider how many ſorrows have, do, and ſhall in future ages, inhabit under all thoſe roofs, and do not vex thy ſelf with thoſe inconveniences which are common to mortality, as if they were only yours. And ſure 'twas good advice: for ſuffering is almoſt as inſeparable an adjunct of our nature, as dying is: yet we do not ſee men very apt to imbitter their whole lives by the fore-ſight that they muſt die, but ſeeing it a thing as univerſal as inevitable, they are more forward to take up the Epicures reſolution, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*, 1 Cor. 15. 32. And why ſhould we not look upon afflictions alſo as the common lot of humanity, and as we take the advantages, ſo be content to bear the incumbrances of that ſtate?

Other mens equal ſhare in calamity, is not only a poſſibility, but often a viſible certainty.

2. But beſides that implicite allowance that is thus to be made for the unknown calamities of others, if we ſurvey but thoſe that lie open and viſible to us, the moſt of us ſhall find enough to diſcountenance our complaints. Who is there that when he has moſt ſtudiouſly recollected his miſeries, may not find ſome or other that apparently equals, if not exceeds him? He that ſtomacks his own being contemn'd and ſlighted, may ſee another perſecuted and oppreſt. He that groans under ſome ſharp pains, may ſee another afflicted with ſharper: and even he that has the moſt acute torments in his body, may ſee another more ſadly cruciated by the agonies of his mind. So that if we would but look about us, we ſhould ſee ſo many foreign occaſions of our pity, that we ſhould be aſham'd to confine it wholly to our ſelves.

The remarkably unhappy are the leſs number of men: but 'tis for little things moſt men complain.

3. It will perhaps be ſaid that this cannot be univerſally true, for that there muſt in comparative degrees be ſome loweſt ſtate of miſery: I grant it, but ſtill that ſtate conſiſts not in ſuch an indiviſible point, that any one perſon can have the incloſure; or if it do, 'twill be ſo hard for any to diſcern who that one perſon is, that I need deſire no fairer a compoſition, than to have every man ſuſpend his repinings, till he can evince his title. But alas there are but few that can make any approaches to ſuch a pretence: for though if we advert to mens complaints, we ſhould think all degrees of compariſon were confounded, and every man were equally the greateſt ſufferer; yet certainly in the truth of things 'tis nothing ſo: for (not to repeat what was before mention'd, that probably no man is miſerable in any proportion to the utmoſt degree of poſſibility) the remarkably unhappy are far the leſs number. And how paſſionately ſoever men exaggerate their calamities, yet perhaps in their ſober mood, they will ſcarce change ſtates with thoſe whom they profeſs to think more happy than themſelves. It was the ſaying of *Socrates*, that if there were a common Bank made of all mens troubles, moſt men would rather chuſe to take thoſe they brought, than to venture upon a new dividend. And indeed he had reaſon for his ſuppoſition; for conſidering how great a part of many mens afflictions are of their own making, fictitious and imaginary, they may juſtly fear leſt they ſhould exchange feathers for lead, their own empty ſhadows for the real and preſſing calamities of others, and cannot but think it beſt to ſit down with their own, which ſerves their declamations as well, and their eaſe much better. We oft ſee men at a little miſ-ſhaping of a garment, a ſcarce diſcernable error in their cook, or their ſhorteſt interruption in their ſports, in ſuch tranſport of trouble, as if they were the moſt unfortunate men in the world; yet for all that you ſhall hardly perſwade them to change with him whoſe coarſe cloathing ſuperſedes all care of the faſhion, whoſe appetite was never diſappointed for want of ſawce, and whoſe perpetual toil makes him inſenſible what the defeat of ſport ſignifies.

We know the utmoſt of the ills we ſuffer, and would not willingly change our condition with another.

4. Nay even where the exchange ſeems more equal, where the afflictions are on both ſides ſolid and ſubſtantial, yet a prudent man would ſcarce venture upon the barter. 'Tis no ſmall advantage to know what we have to conteſt with, to have experimented the worſt of its attacks, by which we become better able to guard our ſelves: but a new evil comes with the force of a ſurpriſe, and finds us open and diſarmed. It is indeed almoſt a miraculous power that cuſtom has in reconciling us to things otherwiſe diſpleaſing; all our ſenſes are thought to remit of their averſion

by familiarity with ungrateful objects: that ugly form which at first makes us start, by use divests its terror, and we reconcile our selves to harsh sounds and ill relishes by long custom. And sure it has the very same effect upon our minds: the most fierce calamities do by acquaintance grow more tractable; so that he that exchanges an old one for a new, do's but bring a wild Lion into his house instead of a tame: it may for ought he knows immediately tear him in pieces, but at least must cost him a great deal of pains to render it gentle and familiar, and certainly no wise man would wish to make such a bargain.

Affliction is like a publick Tax, a share in which every one must be content to bear.

5. By all this it appears that how extravagantly soever we aggravate our own calamities and extenuate other mens, we dare not upon recollection stand to our own estimate: and what can be said more in prejudice of our discontent? 'Tis a granted maxim, that every man must have afflictions. ***Man that is born of a woman***, says ***Job, is of few years and full of trouble***, Job 13. 4. and we must reverse Gods fundamental law, before we can hope for a total exemption. All that any man can aspire to, is to have but an equal share with others, and the generality of men have so, at least none can prove he has not so; and till he can, his murmurs will sure be very unjustifiable, especially when they have this convincing circumstance against them, that he dares not upon sober thoughts change his afflictions with most of his neighbours. He is an ill member of community, who in publick assessments would shuffle off all payments: and he is no better who in this common tax God has laid upon our nature, is not content to bear his share.

'Tis injustice and partiality to expect to be exempted.

6. And truly would we but consider that in all our sufferings nothing befalls us but what is common to our kind, nay which is extreamly exceeded by many within the verge of our own observation, we must be senselesly partial to be impatient. The Apostle thought it a competent consolation for the first Christians, that ***there had no temptation befallen them but what was common to men***, 1 Cor. 10. 13. and we betray very extravagant opinions of our selves if it be not so to us. Indeed 'twas scarce possible for us to be so unsatisfied, as the greatest part of us are, did we in the comparing our selves with others, proceed with any tolerable ingenuity.

The common way of comparing conditions, is fallacious.

7. But alas we are very fallacious and deceitful in the point, we do not compare the good of others with our good, nor their evil with our evil; but with an envious curiosity we amass together all the desirable circumstances of our neighbours condition, and with as prying discontent we ransack all our grievance, and confront to them. This is so unsincere a way of proceeding, as the most ordinary understanding can detect. If I should wager that my arm were longer than another mans, and for trial measure my arm with his finger, he must be stupidly silly, that should award for me, and yet this were not a grosser cheat, than that which we put upon our selves in our comparisons with others. And 'tis a little strange to observe unto what various purposes we can apply this one thin piece of Sophistry: for when we compare our neighbours and our selves in point of Morality, we do but reverse the fallacy, and presently make his vices as much exceed ours, as our calamities did his in the other instance. They are indeed both great violences to reason and justice, yet the latter is sure the pleasanter kind of deceit. A man has some joy in thinking himself less wicked than his neighbour, but what imaginable comfort can he take in thinking himself more miserable! Certainly he that would submit to a cousenage, had much better shift the scene, and think his sufferings less than they are, rather than more; for since opinion is the thing that usually sets an edge upon our calamities, it might be a profitable deceit that could steal that from us.

We take glittering misery for real happiness

8. But we need not blindfold our selves if we would but use our eyes aright, and see things in their true shapes; and if we did thus, what a strange turn would there be in the common estimates of the world? How many of the guilded troubles of greatness, which men at a distance look on with so much admiration and desire, would then be as much contemned as now they are courted? A competency would then get the better of abundance, and the now envyed pomp of Princes, when balanced with the cares and hazards annext, would be so far from a bait, that men like *Saul*, 1 *Sam.* 10. 22. would *hide themselves* from the preferment; and he that understood the weight, would rather chuse to wield a Flail than a Sceptre; yet so childishly are we besotted with the glittering appearance of things, that we conclude felicity must needs dwell where there is a magnificent Portico, and being possest with this fancy we over-look her in our own humble Cottages, where she would more constantly reside, if she could but find us at home: but we are commonly engaged in a rambling pursuit of her where she is seldomest to be found, and in the interim miss of her at our own door.

9. Indeed

9. Indeed there is ſcarce a greater folly or unhappineſs incident to mans nature, than this fond admiration of other mens enjoyments, and contempt of our own. And whilſt we have that humor, it will ſupplant not only our preſent, but all poſſibilities of our future content. For though we could draw to our ſelves all thoſe things for which we envy others, we ſhould have no ſooner made them our own, than they will grow deſpicable and nauſeous to us. This is a ſpeculation which has been atteſted by innumerable experiments, there being nothing more frequent, than to ſee men with impatient eagerneſs, nay often with extream hazards purſue thoſe acqueſts, which when they have them, they are immediately ſick of. There is ſcarce any man that may not give himſelf inſtances of this in his own particular: and yet ſo fatally ſtupid are we, that no defeats will diſcipline us, or take us off from theſe falſe eſtimates of other mens happineſſes. And truly while we ſtate our compariſons ſo unequally, they are as miſchievous as the common proverb ſpeaks them odious: but if we could begin at the right end, and look with as much compaſſion on the adverſities of our brethren, as we do with envy on their proſperities, every man would find cauſe to ſit down contentedly with his own burden, and confeſs that he bears but the proportionable ſhare of his common nature, unleſs perhaps it be where ſome extraordinary demerits of his own have added to the weight; and in that caſe he has more reaſon to admire his afflictions are ſo few, than ſo many. And certainly every man knows ſo many more ills by himſelf, than it is poſſible for him to do by another, that he that really ſees himſelf exceed others in his ſufferings, will find cauſe enough to think he do's in ſins alſo.

While we admire the falſe enjoyments of others we contemn our own real bleſſings.

10. But if we ſtretch the compariſon beyond our contemporaries, and look back to the generations of old, we ſhall have yet farther cauſe to acknowledge Gods great indulgence to us. *Abraham* though the friend of God, was not exempted from ſevere trials, he was firſt made to wander from his Country, and betake himſelf to a kind of vagrant life, was a long time ſuſpended from the bleſſing of his deſired off-ſpring; and when at laſt his beloved *Iſaac* was obtained, it cauſed a domeſtick jarre, which he was fain to compoſe by the expulſion of *Iſhmael* though his ſon alſo. But what a conteſt may we think there was in his own bowels when that rigorous task was impoſed on him of ſacrificing his *Iſaac*? and though his faith gloriouſly triumph'd over it, yet ſure there could not be a greater preſſure upon human nature. *David* the man after Gods own heart is no leſs ſignal for his afflictions than for his piety: he was for a great while an exile from his Country, and (which he moſt bewailed) from the Sanctuary by the perſecutions of *Saul*: and after he was ſettled in that throne to which Gods immediate aſſignation had intitled him, what a ſucceſſion of calamities had he in his own family? the inceſtuous rape of his Daughter, the retaliation of that by the as unnatural murder of *Ammon*, and that ſeconded by another no leſs barbarous conſpiracy of *Abſolam* againſt himſelf; his expulſion from *Jeruſalem*, the baſe revilings of *Shimei*, and finally the loſs of that dearling ſon in the act of his ſin. A cluſter of afflictions in compariſon whereof the moſt of ours are but like the *gleanings* (as the Prophet ſpeaks) *after the vintage is done*. It were indeed endleſs to inſtance in all the ſeveral Forefathers of our Faith before *Chriſt*'s Incarnation: the Apoſtle give us a brief, but very comprehenſive compendium of their ſufferings, *They had trial of cruel mockings and ſcourgings; yea moreover, of bonds and impriſonments: they were ſtoned, were ſawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain with the ſword: they wandred about in ſheep-skins, and goat-skins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented: they wandred in deſerts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth*, Heb. 11. 36, 37, 38. And if we look on the Primitive Chriſtians, we ſhall ſee them perfectly the counterpart to them, their priviledges conſiſted not in any immunities from calamities; for their whole lives were ſcenes of ſufferings. St *Paul* give us an account of his own, *in labours more abundant, in ſtripes above meaſure, in priſons more frequent, in deaths oft: of the Jews five times received I forty ſtripes ſave one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I ſtoned, thrice I ſuffer'd ſhipwrack, a night and a day have I been in the deep, in journeying often*, &c. 2 Cor. 11. 23. and if his ſingle hardſhips roſe thus high, what may we think the whole ſum of all his fellow-labourers amounted to together, with that noble Army of Martyrs, who ſeal'd their faith with their blood; of whoſe ſufferings *Eccleſiaſtick* hiſtory gives us ſuch aſtoniſhing relations?

The Patriarchs and other great examples of vertue in Scripture had great domeſtick misfortunes,

11. And now *being compaſſed about with ſo great a cloud of witneſſes*, the Apoſtle's inference is very irrefragable, *let us run with patience the race which is ſet before us*, Heb. 12. 1, 2. But yet it is more ſo, if we proceed on to that conſideration he adjoyns, *Looking unto Jeſus the Author and Finiſher of our faith, who for the joy that was ſet*

Above all, the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, our Lord Jeſus, was exercis'd in ſufferings.

before him, endur'd the cross, despising the shame. Indeed if we contemplate him in the whole course of his life, we shall find him rightly stiled by the Prophet *a man of sorrows*, Isai. 53. 3. And as if he had charged himself with all our griefs as well as our sins, there is scarce any human calamity which we may not find exemplified in him. Do's any complain of the lowness and poverty of his condition? Alas his whole life was a state of indigence: he was forced to be an inmate with the beasts, be laid in a stable at his birth, and after himself professes that he *had no where to lay his head*, Luke 9. 58. Is any opprest with infamy and reproach? he may see his Saviour accused as a *glutton and a wine-bibber*, Luke 7. 34. *a Blasphemer*, John 10. 33. *a Sorcerer*, Matt. 12. 24. *a perverter of the nation*, Luke 23. 2. Yea to such a sordid lowness had they sunk his repute, that a seditious thief and murderer was thought the more eligible person, *not this man but Barabbas*, John 18. 40. And finally all this scene of indignities inclos'd with the spightful pageantry of *mockery* acted by the souldiers, *Matt.* 27. 28. and the yet more barbarous insultings of Priests and Scribes, verse 41. Is any man despised or deserted by his friends? he was contemned by his countrymen, thought frantick by his friends, betray'd by one of his disciples, abandon'd by all, unless that one who follow'd him longest, to renounce him the most shamefully by a three-fold abjuration. Nay what is infinitely more than this, he seem'd deserted by God also, as is witnessed by that doleful exclamation, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Mark 15. 34. Is any dissatisfied with the hardships or labouriousness of his life? let him remember his Saviour's was not a life of delicacy or ease: he was never enter'd in those Academies of luxury, where men are *gorgeously apparell'd and live delicately*, Luke 7. 25. but he was brought up under the mean roof of a Carpenter, and consequently subjected to all the lowness of such an education. His initiation to his Prpohetick office was with the miraculous severity of a forty days fast, and in his discharge of it, we find him in perpetual labours, *going about doing good*, Acts 10. 38. and that not in triumph, like a Prince bestowing his largesses, but in weary peregrinations, never riding but once, and that only upon a borrow'd beast, *and to fulfil a prophecy*, Matt. 21. 4. Do's any man groan under sharp and acute pains? let him consider what his Redeemer endur'd, how in his infancy at his Circumcision he offer'd the first-fruits, as an earnest of that bloody vintage when *he trod the vine-press alone*, Isai. 63. 3. Let him attend him through all the stages of his direful Passion, and behold his arms pinion'd with rough cords, his head smote with a reed, and torn with his crown of thorns, his back ploughed with those *long furrows* (Psal. 120. 3.) the scourges had made; his macerated feeble body opprest with the weight of his cross, and at last rackt and extended on it; his hands and feet, those nervous and consequently most sensible parts transfixt with nails, his whole body fastned to that accursed tree, and exposed naked to the air in a cold season; his throat parched with thirst, and yet more afflicted with that vinegar and gall wherewith they pretended to relieve him; and finally his life expiring amidst the full sense of these accurate torments. Lastly do's any man labour under the bitterest of all sorrows, importunate temptations to, or a wounded spirit for sin? even here also he may find that he has an *high Priest who hath been touched with the sense of his infirmities*, Heb. 4. 15. He was violently assaulted with a succession of temptations, *Matt.* 4. and we cannot doubt but Satan would on him employ the utmost of his skill. Nor was he less opprest with the burden of sin, (ours I mean, though not his own.) What may we think were his apprehensions in the Garden, when he so earnestly deprecated that which was his whole errand into the world? What a dreadful pressure was that which wrung from him that bloody sweat, and cast him into that inexplicable agony, the horrour whereof was beyond the comprehensions of any but his who felt it? And finally how amazing was the sense of Divine wrath, which extorted that stupendous complaint, that *strorg cry* on the Cross, *Heb.* 5. 7. the sharp accent whereof, if it do aright sound in our hearts, must certainly quite overwhelm our loudest groans? And now certainly I may say with *Pilate*, *Ecce homo*, behold the man; or rather with a more Divine Author, Behold *if ever there were sorrows like unto his sorrows*, Lam. 1. 12.

'Tis most reasonable to expect, that what was done in the green tree, should be done in the dry.

12. And sure it were but a reasonable inference, that which we find made by Christ himself, *if these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* Luke 23. 31. If an imputative guilt could nourish so scorching a flame, pull down so severe a wrath; what can we expect, who are meerly made up of combustible matter, whose proper personal sins cry for vengeance? Sure were we to judge by human measures, we should reckon to have more than a double portion of our Saviour's Sufferings entail'd upon us: yet such is the efficacy of his, that they have

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commuted for ours, and have left us only such a share, as may evidence our relation to our crucified Lord: such as may serve only for badges and cognizances to whom we retain. For alas, let the most afflicted of us weigh our sorrows with his, how absurdly unequal will the comparison appear? And therefore as the best expedient to baffle our mutinies, to shame us out of our repinings, let us often draw this uneven parallel, confront our petty uneasinesses with his unspeakable torments; and sure 'tis impossible but our admiration and gratitude must supplant our impatiences.

'Tis a criminal niceness not to be willing to follow the Captain of our Salvation

13. This is indeed the method to which the Apostle directs us, *Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, least ye be weary and faint in your minds: ye have not yet resisted unto blood*, Heb. 12 3, 4. Was he contradicted, and shall we expect to be humor'd and comply'd with? Did he resist to blood, and shall we think those pressures intolerable, which force only a few tears from us? This is such an unmanly niceness, as utterly makes us unfit to follow the Captain of our Salvation. What a souldier is he like to make, that will take no share of the hazards and hardships of his General? Honest *Uriah* would not take the lawful solaces of his own house, upon the consideration that his *Lord Joab* (though but his fellow subject) *lay encamped in the open fields*, 2 Sam. 11. 11. yea though he was sent by him from the Camp. And shall we basely forsake ours in pursuit of our ease? He is of a degenerous spirit, whom the example of his Superiour will not animate. *Plutarch* tells us, that *Cato* marching through the deserts, was so distrest for water, that a small quantity was brought to him in a helmet as a great prize, which he refusing because he could not help his souldiers to the like, they were so transported with that generosity, that it extinguish'd the sense of their thirst, and they were ashamed to complain of that their Leader voluntarily endur'd for their sakes. And surely we extremely discredit our institution, if we cannot equal their ingenuity, and follow ours with as great alacrity through all the difficulties he has trac'd before us, and for us.

The exemplary practice of holy men takes away the excuse of human frailty.

24. Nor let us think to excuse our selves upon the impotency of our flesh, which wants the assistance which his Divinity gave him: for that plea is superseded by the forementioned examples of the Saints, men of like passions with us, who not only patiently, but joyfully endur'd all tribulations; by which it appears it is not impossible to our nature, with those aids of Grace which are common to us with them: for certainly the difference between them and us is not so much in the degrees of the aids, as in the diligence of employing them. Let us therefore, as the Apostle advises, *lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees*, Heb. 12. 12. and with a noble emulation follow those heroick patterns they have set us. And since we see that even those Favorites of heaven, have smarted so severely, let us never dream of an immunity; but when ever we find our selves inclining to any such flattering hope, let every one of us upbraid our selves in those terms the *Jews* did our Saviour, *Art thou greater than Abraham, and the Prophets, who makest thou thy self?* John 8. 53. Nay we may descend lower and take in not only all the inferiour Saints of former times, but all those our contemporaries in sufferings, which are most within our view, and may ask the Apostle's question, *what then? are we better than they?* Rom. 3. 9. If we think we are, 'tis certainly we are so much worse by that insolence; and if we confess we are not, upon what score can we pretend to be better treated? To conclude, let us not pore only upon our peculiar evils, but attentively look about us, and consider what others endure: and since in frolicks we can sport our selves with many uneasinesses for company sake, let us not be more pusillanimous in our sober moods, but every man chearfully take his turn in bearing the common burden of mortality, till we put off both it and its appendages together, *when this mortal shall put on immortality*, 1 Cor. 15. 54.

SECT. X.

Of particular Aids for the gaining of Contentment.

To general consideration, particular will usefully succeed.

WE have now past through all those considerations we at first propos'd and may trust the considering Reader to make his own collections: yet because impatience is the vice that has been all this while arraign'd, I am to fore-see it possible, that those who have

the greatest degree of that, may be the least willing to attend the whole process, and therefore I think it may not be amiss, for their ease to suit and reduce all into some short directions and rules for the acquiring Contentment.

The first direction is to have a low opinion of ones self.

2. The first and most fundamental is, the mortifying our Pride, which as it is the seminary of most sins, so especially this of repining. Men that are highly opinion'd of themselves, are commonly unsatisfiable: for how well soever they are treated, they still think it short of their merits. Princes have often experimented this in those who have done them signal services; but God finds it in those who have done him none, and we expect he shall dispense to us according to those false estimates we put upon our selves. Therefore he that aspires to Content, must first take truer measures of himself, and consider that as he was nothing till God gave him a being, so all that he can produce from that being, is God's by original right, and therefore can pretend to nothing of reward; so that whatever he receives, is still upon the account of new bounty; and to complain that he has no more, is like the murmurs of an unthankful debtor, who would still encrease those scores which he knows he can never pay.

A second, to reflect on the goods that are enjoyed.

3. In the second place, let every man consider how many blessings (notwithstanding his no clame to any) he daily enjoys: and whether those he so impatiently raves after be not much inferiour to them. Nay let him ask his own heart, whether he would quit all those he has, for them he wants, and if he would not, (as I suppose no man in his wits would, those wits being part of the barter) let him then judge how unreasonable his repinings are, when himself confesses he has the better part of worldly happiness, and never any man living had all.

A third, to be thankful for them.

4. In the third place therefore let him secure his duty of thankfulness for those good things he hath, and that will insensibly undermine his impatiences for the rest, it being impossible to be at once thankful and murmuring. To this purpose it were very well, if he would keep a solemn catalogue of all bounties, protections, and deliverances he has receiv'd from God's hand, and every night examine what accessions that day has brought to the sum: and he that did this, would undoubtedly find so many incitations to gratitude, that all those to discontent would be stifled in the croud. And since acknowledgment of God's mercies is all the tribute he exacts for them, we must certainly look on that as an indispensable duty: and therefore he that finds that God shortens his hand, stops the efflux of his bounty towards him, should reflect on himself, whether he be not behind in that homage by which he holds, and have not by his unthankfulness *turn'd away good things from him*, Jer. 5. 25. And if he find it so (as who alas is there that may not?) he cannot sure for shame complain, but must in prudence reinforce his gratitude for what is left, as the best means to recover what he has lost.

A fourth, to reflect that good things are enjoyed, when the contrary are deserv'd.

5. But his murmurs will yet be more amazingly silenc'd, if in the fourth place he compares the good things he enjoys with the ill he has done. Certainly this is a most infallible cure for our impatiences, the holiest man living being able to accuse himself of such sins, as would according to all human measures of equity forfeit all blessings, and pull down a greater weight of judgment than the most miserable groan under. Therefore as before I advised to keep a catalogue of benefits receiv'd, so here it would be of use to draw up one of sins committed. And doubtless he that confronts the one with the other, cannot but be astonished to find them both so numerous, equally wondering at God's mercy in continuing his blessings, in despight of all his provocations, and at his own baseness in continuing his provocations, in despight of all those blessings. Indeed 'tis nothing but our affected ignorance of our own demerits, that makes it possible for us to repine under the severest of God's dispensations. Would we but ransack our hearts, and see all the abominations that lie there, nay would the most of us but recollect those barefac'd crimes which even the world can witness against us, we should find more than enough to balance the heaviest of our pressures. When therefore by our impatient strugglings we fret and gall our selves under our burdens, let us interrogate our souls in the words of the Prophet, *Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?* Let us not spend our breath in murmurs and out-cries, which will only serve to provoke more stripes: but *let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord*, Lam. 3. 39, 40. diligently seek out *that accursed thing*, which has caused our discomfeiture, *Josh.* 6. 18. and by the removal of that, prepare the way for the access of mercy. But alas how preposterous a method do we take in our afflictions? We accuse every thing but what we ought, furiously fly at all the second causes of our calamity, nay too often at the first by impious disputes of providence, and in the

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mean time, as *Job* speaks, *the root of the matter is found in us*, Job 19. 28. We shelter and protect in our bosom the real Author of our miseries. The true way then to allay the sense of our sufferings, is to sharpen that of our sins. The prodigal thought the meanest condition in his fathers family a preferment. *Make me one of thy hired servants*, Luke 15. 19. And if we have his penitence, we shall have his submission also, and calmly attend Gods disposals of us.

A fifth, to reflect that what befalls us, is from the hand of God; and a sixth, that 'tis an advantage to have here our evil things.

6. As every man in his affliction is to look inward on his own heart, so also upward, and consider by whose providence all events are order'd. *Is there any evil* (*i. e.* of punishment) *in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?* Amos 3. 6. and what are we worms that we should dispute with him? Shall a man contend with his Maker? Let the *potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth*, Isai. 45. 9. And as his power is not to be control'd, so neither is his justice to be impeach'd. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Gen. 18. 25. And where we can neither resist nor appeal, what have we to do but humbly to submit? Nor are we only compell'd to it by necessity, but induced and invited by interest, since his dispensations are directed not barely to assert his dominion, but to evidence his paternal care over us. He discerns our needs, and accordingly applies to us. The benignity of his nature permits him not to take delight in our distresses, *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*, Lam. 3. 33. and therefore when ever he administers unto us a bitter cup, we may be sure the ingredients are medicinal, and such as our infirmities require. He dares not trust our intemperate appetites with unmixt prosperities, the lushiousness whereof though it may please our palats, yet like St. *John's* book, *Rev.* 10. 9. that *honey in the mouth may prove gall in the bowels*, ingender the most fatal diseases. Let us therefore in our calamities *not consult with flesh and blood*, Gal. 1. 16. (which the more it is bemoan'd, the more it complains) but look to the hand that strikes; and assure our selves, that the stripes are not more severe, than he sees necessary in order to our good: and since they are so, they ought in reason to be our choices as well as his; and not only Religion, but self-love will prompt us to say, with old *Ely*, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*, 1 Sam. 3. 11. But alas we do not understand what is our interest; because we do not rightly understand what we are our selves. We consider our selves meerly in our animal being, our bodies and those sensitive faculties vested in them, and when we are invaded there, we think we are undone, though that breach be made only, to relieve that diviner part within us, besieg'd and opprest with the flesh about it (for so God knows it too often is;) or if we do not consider it in that notion of an enemy, yet at the utmost estimate, the body is to the soul but as the garment to the body, a decent case or cover: now what man (not stark frantick) would not rather have his clothes cut than his flesh? and then by the rate of proportion, we may well question our own sobriety, when we repine that our souls are secur'd at the cost of our bodies, and that is certainly the worst, the unkindest design that God has upon us; and our impatient resistances serve only to frustrate the kind, the medicinal part of afflictions, but will not at all rescue us from the severe. Our murmurings may ruin our souls, but will never avert any of our outward calamities.

A seventh, to have a right estimate of the world, and the state of humanity.

7. A seventh help to Contentment is to have a right estimate of the world, and the common state of humanity: to consider the world but as a stage, and our selves but as actors, and to resolve that it is very little material what part we play so we do it well. A Comedian may get as much applause by acting the slave as the conqueror, and he that acts the one to day, may to morrow reverse the part, and personate the other. So great are the vicissitudes of the world, that there is no building any firm hopes upon it. All the certainty we have of it, is, that in every condition it has its uneasinesses: so that when we court a chance, we rather seek to vary than end our miseries. And certainly he that has well imprest upon his mind the vanity and vexation of the world, cannot be much surprised at any thing that befalls him in it. We expect no more of any thing but to do its kind, and we may as well be angry that we cannot bring the lions to our cribs, or fix the wind to a certain point, as that we cannot secure our selves from dangers and disappointments in this rough and mutable world. We are therefore to lay it as an infallible maxim, that in this vale of tears every man must meet with sorrows and disasters: and then sure we may take our peculiar with evenness of temper, as being but the natural consequent of our being men. And though possibly we may every one think himself to have a double portion, yet that is usually from the deceitful comparisons we make of our selves with others. We take the magnifying glasses of discontent and envy when we view our own miseries and others felicities, but look on our enjoy-

ments and their sufferings through the contracting opticks of ingratitude and incompassion: and whilst we do thus, 'tis impossible but we must foment our own dissatisfactions. He that will compare to good purpose must do it honestly and sincerely, and view his neighbours calamities with the same attention he do's his own, and his own comforts with the same he do's his neighbours: and then many of the great seeming inequalities would come pretty near a level.

An eighth, to consider how ill natur'd a thing envy and discontent is.

8. But even where they do not, it, in the eighth place deserves however to be consider'd how ill natur'd a thing it is, for any man to think himself more miserable because another is happy: and yet this is the very thing, by which alone many men have made themselves wretched: for many have created wants, meerly from the envious contemplation of other mens abundance. And indeed there is nothing more disingenuous, (or to go higher) more Diabolical. *Lucifer* was happy enough in his original state, yet could not think himself so because he was *not like the most High*, Isai. 14. 14. And when by that insolent ambition he had forfeited bliss, it has ever since been an aggravation of his torment, that mankind is assumed to a capacity of it; and accordingly he makes it the design of his envious industry to defeat him. Now how perfectly are the two first parts of this copy transcrib'd, by those who first cannot be satisfied with any inferiour degree of prosperity, and then whet their impatiences with other mens enjoyments of what they cannot attain? And 'tis much to be doubted that they who go thus far may compleat the parallel, and endeavour when they have opportunitity to undermine that happiness they envy. Therefore since Satan is so apt to impress his whole image, where he has drawn any of his lineaments, it concerns us warily to guard our selves, and by a Christian sympathy with our brethren, *rejoyce with them that rejoyce*, Rom. 12. 15. make the comfort of others, an allay, not an improvement of our own miseries. Charity has a strange magnetick power, and attracts the concerns of our brethren to us, and he that has that in his breast can never want refreshment, whilst any about him are happy; for by adopting their interest, he shares in their joys. *Jethro* though an alien *rejoyc'd for all the good God had done to Israel*, Exod. 18. 9. and why should not we have as sensible a concurrence with our fellow Christians? And he that has so, will still find something to balance his own sufferings.

A ninth, to desire few things.

9. Let him that aspires to Contentment set bounds to his desire. Tis our common fault in this affair, we usually begin at the wrong end, we *enlarge our desires as hell, and cannot be satisfied*, Hab. 2. 5. and then think God uses us ill, if he do not fill our insatiable appetites: whereas if we would confine our expectations to those things which we need, or he has promis'd, there are few of us who would not find them abundantly answer'd. Alas how few things are there which our nature (if not stimulated by fancy and luxury) requires? And how rare is it to find them who want those? Nay who have not many additionals for delight and pleasure? And yet God's promise under the Gospel extends only to those necessaries; for where *Christ* assures his disciples that *these things shall be added unto them*, Matt. 6. 33. the context apparently restrains *these things* to meat and drink and clothing. Therefore take *no thought for the life what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, nor yet for the body what you shall put on*, verse 25. Now what pretence have we to claim more than our Charter gives us? God never articled with the ambitious to give him honours, with the covetous to fill his bags, or with the voluptuous to feed his luxuries. Let us therefore, if we expect to be satisfied, modestly confine our desires within the limits he has set us: and then every accession which he superadds will appear (what it is) a largess and bounty. But whilst our appetites are boundless, and rather stretch'd than filled with our acquests; what possibility is there of their satisfaction? And when we importune God for it, we do but assign him such a task the Poets made a representation of their Hell, the filling a sieve with water, or the rolling a stone up a precipice.

A tenth, to confine our thoughts to the present time.

10. A great expedient for Contentment, is to confine our thoughts to the present, and not to let them loose to future events. Would we but do this, we might shake off a great part of our burden: for we often heap fantastick loads upon our selves by anxious presages of things which perhaps will never happen, and yet sink more under them, than under the real weight that is actually upon us. And this is certainly one of the greatest follies imaginable: for either the evil will come or it will not, if it will 'tis sure no such desirable guest that we should go out to meet it, we shall feel it time enough when it falls on us, we need not project to anticipate our sense of it: but if it will not, what extream madness is it for a man to torment himself with that which will never be, to create engines of tortures, and by such

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aerial afflictions, make himſelf as miſerable as the moſt real ones could do? And truly this is all that we uſually get by our fore-ſight... Previſion is one of God's attributes, and he mocks at all our pretences to it, by a frequent defeating of all our fore-caſts. He do's it often in our hopes: ſome little croſs circumſtance many times demoliſhes thoſe goodly machines we raiſe to our ſelves: and he do's it not leſs in our fears, thoſe ills we ſolemnly expected often baulk us, and others from an unexpected coaſt ſuddenly invade us. And ſince we are ſo blind, ſo ſhort-ſighted, let us never take upon us to be ſcouts, to diſcover danger at a diſtance (for 'tis manifold odds we ſhall only bring home falſe alarms) but let us reſt our ſelves upon that moſt admirable Aphoriſm of our bleſſed Lord, *Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof*, Matt. 6. 34. apply our ſelves with Chriſtian courage to bear the preſent, and leave God either to augment or diminiſh, as he ſees fit for the future. Or if we will needs be looking forward, let it be in obedience not contradiction to our duty: let us entertain our ſelves with thoſe futurities which we are ſure are not Chimera's, Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell. The nearer we draw theſe things to our view, the more inſenſible will all intermedial objects be; they will deceive our ſenſe of preſent, and much more foreſtall the apprehenſion of future evils: for 'tis our neglect of things eternal, that leaves us thus at leiſure for the tranſitory.

An eleventh, to have recourſe to God by prayer.

11. In the laſt place let us in all our diſtreſſes ſuperſede our anxieties and ſollicitudes by that moſt effectual remedy the Apoſtle preſcribes, *Is any man afflicted, let him pray*, Jam. 5. 14. And this ſure is a moſt rational preſcription: for alas what elſe can we do towards the redreſs of our griefs? We who are ſo impotent, that we have not power over the moſt deſpicable excreſcence of our own body, cannot make *one hair white or black*, Matt. 5. 36. what can we do towards the new moulding our condition, or modelling things without us? Our ſollicitudes ſerve only to bind our burdens faſter upon us, but this expedient of Prayer will certainly relieve us. *Call upon me*, ſays God, *in the time of trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou ſhalt praiſe me*, Pſal. 50. 15. When ever therefore we are ſinking in the floods of affliction, let us thus ſupport our ſelves by repreſenting our want unto our gracious Lord, cry unto him as St. *Peter* did, *Matt.* 14. 30. and he will *take us by the hand, and be the winds* never ſo *boiſterous or contrary*, preſerve us from ſinking: the waves or billows of this troubleſome world, will ſerve but to toſs us cloſer into his arms, who can with a word appeaſe the roughest tempeſt, or reſcue from it. O let us not then be ſo unkind to our ſelves, as to neglect this infallible means of our deliverance! but with the Pſalmiſt take our refuge under the *ſhadow of Divine wings till the calamity be overpaſt*, Pſal. 57. 1. And as this is a ſure expedient in all our real important afflictions, ſo it is a good teſt by which to try what are ſo. We are often peeviſh and diſquieted at trifles, nay we take up the quarrels of our luſts and vices, and are diſcontented when they want their wiſh'd ſupplies. Now in either of theſe caſes, no man that at all conſiders who he prays to, will dare to inſert theſe in his prayers, it being a contempt of God to invoke him in things ſo ſlight as the one or impious as the other. It will therefore be good for every man when he goes to addreſs for relief, to conſider which of his preſſures they are, that are worthy of that ſolemn deprecation: and when he has ſingled thoſe out, let him reflect, and he will find he has in that prejudg'd all his other diſcontents as frivolous or wicked. And then ſure he cannot think fit to harbour them, but muſt for ſhame diſmiſs them, ſince they are ſuch, as he dares not avow to him, from whom alone he can expect relief. God always pities our real miſeries, but our imaginary ones dare not demand it. Let us not then create ſuch diſeaſes to our ſelves, as we cannot declare to our Phyſician: and when thoſe are precluded, for all the reſt St. *Paul's* recipe is a Catholicon, *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayers and ſupplications, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known to God.* Phil. 4. 6.

Sect. XI.

Of Resignation.

Counsels are not charms, to operate by being repeated;

AND now amidst such variety of Receipts, 'twill be hard to instance any one sort of calamity which can escape their efficacy, if they be but duly apply'd. But indeed we have generally a compendious way of frustrating all remedies by never making use of them: like fantastick patients we are well enough content to have our disease discourst, and medicines prescrib'd, but when the Physick comes, have still some pretence or other to protract the taking it. But I shall beseech the Reader to consider, that counsels are no charms, to work without any cooperation of the concern'd person: they must be adverted to, they must be ponder'd and consider'd, and finally they must be practic'd, or else the utmost good they can do us, is to give us a few hours divertisement in the reading: but they do us a mischief that infinitely out-weighs it, for they improve our guilts by the ineffective tender they make of rescuing us from them, and leave us accountable not only for the original crimes, but our obstinate adhesion to them in spight of admonition.

Nor are books to be taken up as cards and dice for diversion,

2. I say this because it is a little too notorious, that many take up books only as they do cards or dice, as an instrument of diversion. 'Tis a good entertainment for their curiosity to see what can be said upon any subject, and be it well or ill handled, they can please themselves equally with the ingenuity or ridiculousness of the composure, and when they have done this, they have done all they design'd. This indeed may be tolerable in Romances and Play-books, but sure it ill befits Divinity. And yet I fear it ofteneſt happens there: for in the former some do project for some trivial improvements, as the imbellishing of their stile, the inspiriting of their fancies; and some men would scarce be able to drive their pedling trade of wit, did they not thus sweep the stage: but alas how many books of piety are read, of which one cannot discern the least tincture in mens conversations, which sure do's in a great measure proceed from the want of a determinate design in their reading, mens practice being not apt to be less rovers than their speculation. He that takes a practical subject in hand, must do it with a design to conform his practice to what he shall there be convinc'd to be his duty, and he that comes not with this probity of mind, is not like to be much benefited by his reading.

Especially in so important a concern, as the being contented.

3. But one would think this should be an unnecessary caution at this time, for since the intent of this Tract is only to shew men the way to Contentment, 'tis to be suppos'd the Readers will be as much in earnest as the Writer can be, it being every man's proper and most important interest, the instating him in the highest and most supream felicity that this world can admit: yet for all this fair probability, I doubt many will in this instance have the same indifference they have in their other spiritual concerns.

Discontent is a humor which is most indulgent to it self, and 'tis hard to bring men to a real willingness to be cur'd.

4. 'Tis true indeed that a querulous repining humor is one of the most pernicious, the most ugly habits incident to mankind, but yet as deformed people are oft the most in love with themselves, so this crooked piece of our temper is of all others the most indulgent to it self. Melancholy is the most stubborn and untractable of all humors: and discontent being the off-spring of that, partakes of that inflexibility: and accordingly we see how impregnable it often is against all assaults of reason and Religion too. *Jonah* in a sullen mood would justify his discontent even to God himself, and in spight of that calm reproof, *dost thou well to be angry?* Jon. 4. 9. aver *he did well to be angry even to death.* And do we not frequently see men upon an impatience of some disappointment, grow angry even at their comforts? Their friends, their children, their meat, their drink, every thing grows nauseous to them, and in a frantick discontent, they often fling away those things which they most value. Besides this peevish impatience is of so aerial a diet, that 'tis scarce possible to starve it. 'Twill nourish it self with Phantasms and Chimera's, suborn a thousand surmises and imaginary distresses to abet its pretences: and though every one of us can remonstrate to one another, the unreasonableness of this discontent; yet scarce any of us will draw the argument home, or suffer our selves to be convinc'd by what we urge as irrefragable to others. Nay farther this humor is impatient of any diversion, loves to converse only with it self. In bodily pains, men

that

that deſpair of cure are yet glad of allaies and mitigations, and ſtrive by all arts to divert and deceive the ſenſe of their anguiſh; but in this diſeaſe of the mind, men cheriſh and improve their torment, roll and chew the bitter pill in their mouths, that they may be ſure to have its utmoſt flavour; and by devoting all their thoughts to the ſubject of their grief, keep up an uninterrupted ſenſe of it: as if they had the ſame Tyranny for themſelves which *Caligula* had for others, and loved to feel themſelves die. Indeed there is not a more abſurd contradiction in the world, than to hear men cry out of the weight, the intolerableneſs of their burden, and yet graſp it as faſt as if their life were bound up in it; will not depoſite it, no not for the ſmalleſt breathing time. A ſtrange faſcination ſure, and yet ſo frequent that it ought to be the fundamental care of him that would cure men of their diſcontents, to bring them to a hearty willingneſs of being cured.

Diſcontent is a dropſy of the mind, is not to be cur'd by having it's thirſts ſatisfied, but by altering the conſtitution.

5. It may be this will look like paradox, and every man will be apt to ſay he wiſhes nothing more in earneſt, than to be cured of his preſent diſcontent. He that is poor would be cured by wealth, he that is low and obſcure by honour and greatneſs: but ſo an Hydropick perſon may ſay he deſires to have his thriſt cur'd by a perpetual ſupply of drink: yet all ſober people know, that that is the way only to increaſe it: but let the whole habit of the body be rectified, and then the thirſt will ceaſe of it ſelf. And certainly 'tis the very ſame in the preſent caſe, no outward acceſſions will ever ſatisfy our cravings, our appetites muſt be tam'd and reduc'd, and then they will never be able to raiſe tumults, or put us into mutiny and diſcontent: and he (and none but he) that ſubmits to this method, can truly be ſaid to deſire a cure.

The cure is certainly poſſible:

6. But he that thus atteſts the reality of his deſires, and ſeeks Contentment in its proper ſphere, may ſurely arrive at ſome conſiderable degrees of it. We find in all ages men that only by the direction of natural light have calmed their diſquiets, and reaſon'd themſelves into Contentment, even under great and ſenſible preſſures; men who amidſt the acuteſt torments have preſerv'd a ſerenity of mind, and have fruſtrated contempts and reproaches by diſregarding them: and ſure we give a very ill account of our Chriſtianity, if we cannot do as much with it as they did without it.

And if we do our part, will be aſſiſted by God's goodneſs.

7. I do not here propoſe ſuch a Stoical inſenſibility as makes no diſtinction of event, which, though it has been vainly pretended to by many, yet ſure was never attain'd by any upon the ſtrength of diſcourſe. Some natural dulneſs or caſual ſtupefaction muſt concur to that, and perhaps by doing ſo, has had the luck to be canoniz'd for vertue. I mean only ſuch a ſuperiority of mind as raiſes us above our ſufferings, though it exempt us not from the ſenſe of them. We cannot propoſe to our ſelves a higher pattern in any vertue than our bleſſed Lord: yet we ſee he not only felt that load under which he lay, but had the moſt pungent and quick ſenſe of it, ſuch as prompted thoſe earneſt deprecations, *Father, if it be poſſible let this cup paſs*: yet all thoſe diſplacencies of his fleſh were ſurmounted by the Reſignation of his ſpirit, *nevertheleſs not what I will, but what thou wilt*, Matt. 26. 39. And certainly he that in imitation of this pattern, do's in ſpight of all the reluctancies of his ſenſe, thus entirely ſubmit his will, however he may be ſad, yet he is not impatient; nor is he like to be ſad long; for to him that is thus reſign'd, *light will ſpring up*, Pſalm 97. 11. ſome good Angel will be ſent like that to our Saviour to relieve his diſconſolation. God will ſend either ſome outward allaies, or give ſuch interiour comforts and ſupports, as ſhall counterpoiſe thoſe afflictions he takes not off.

God's deſign in correcting us is that of a Parent to break our wills.

8. Indeed the grand deſign of God in correcting us is (the ſame with that of a prudent parent towards his child) to break our wills. That ſtubborn faculty will ſcarce bend with eaſy touches, and therefore do's require ſome force: and when by that rougher handling, he has brought it to a pliantneſs, the work is done. 'Tis therefore our intereſt to cooperate with this deſign, to aſſiſt as much as we are able towards the ſubjugating this unruly part of our ſelves. This is that *Sheba*, 2 Sam. 20. the ſurrendring of whom is God's expectation in all the cloſe ſieges he lays to us. Let us then be ſo wiſe, as by an early reſigning it to divert his farther hoſtilities, and buy our peace with him.

Reſignation is the ſhort way to ſerenity of mind.

9. And truly this is the way not only to gain peace with him, but our ſelves too: 'tis the uſurpation of our will over our reaſon which breeds all the confuſion and tumults within our own breaſts, and there is no poſſibility of curbing its inſolence, but by putting it into ſafe cuſtody, committing it to him who (as our Church teaches us) alone can order the unruly wills of ſinful men. Indeed nothing but experience can fully inform us of the ſerenity and calm of that ſoul, who has reſign'd his will

to God. All care of choosing for himself is happily superseded, he is tempted to no anxious forecasts for future events, for he knows nothing can happen in contradiction of that supreme will, in which he has sanctuary: which will certainly choose for him with that tenderness and regard, that a faithful Guardian would for his Pupil, an indulgent Father for his Child that casts it self into his arms. Certainly there is not in the world such a holy sort of artifice, so Divine a charm to tie our God to us, as this of resigning our selves to him. We find the *Gibeonites* by yielding themselves vassals to the *Israelites*, had their whole army at their beck to rescue them in their danger, *Josh.* 10. 6. and can we think God is less considerate of his homagers and dependents? No certainly, his honour as well as his compassion is concern'd in the relief of those who have surrendred themselves to him.

A method by which our wills can never be crost.

10. Farther yet, when by Resignation we have united our wills to God, we have quite changed the scene, and we who when our wills stood single were liable to perpetual defeats, in this blessed combination can never be crost. When our will is twisted and involved with God's, the same Omnipotence which backs his will, do's also attend ours. God's will, we are sure, admits of no controle, can never be resisted, and we have the same security for ours, so long as it concurs with it. By this means all calamities are unsting'd, and even those things which are most repugnant to our sensitive natures, are yet very agreeable to our spirits, when we consider they are implicitly our own choice, since they are certainly his, whom we have deputed to elect for us. Indeed there can be no face of adversity so averting and formidable, which set in this light will not look amiable. We see daily how many uneasinesses and prejudices men will contentedly suffer in pursuit of their wills: and if we have really espoused God's, made his will ours, we shall with as great (nay far greater) alacrity embrace its distributions, how easy soever to our sense; our souls will more acquiesce in the accomplishment of the Divine will, than our flesh can reluct to any severe effects of it.

Nothing can fall out unhappily.

11. Here then is that footing of firm ground, on which whosoever can stand, may indeed do that which *Archimedes* boasted, move the whole world. He may as to himself subvert the whole course of sublunary things, unvenom all those calamities which are to others the gall of Asps; and in a farther sense verify that Evangelical Prophecy, of *beating swords into plow-shares, spears into pruning-hooks*, Isai. 2. 4. the most hostile weapons, the most adverse events shall be by him converted into instruments of fertility, shall only advance his spiritual growth.

The unresign'd can get nothing by it, but the sullen pleasure of opposing God and tormenting themselves.

12. And now who can chuse but confess this a much more eligible state, than to be always harrassed with solicitudes and cares, perpetually either fearing future defeats, or bewailing the past. And then what can we call it less than madness or enchantment, for men to act so contrary to their own dictates, yea to their very sense and experience, to see and acknowledge the inexplicable felicity of a resigned will, and yet perversly to hold out theirs, though they can get nothing by it, but the sullen pleasure of opposing God, and tormenting themselves? Let us therefore if not for our duty or ease, yet at least for our reputation, the asserting our selves men of sobriety and common sense, do that which upon all these interests we are obliged; let us but give up our wills, and with them we shall certainly divest our selves of all our fruitless anxieties, and cast our burdens upon him who invites us to do so. He who bears all our sins, will bear all our sorrows, our griefs too: if we will but be content to deposite them, he will relieve us from all those oppressing weights, which make *our souls cleave to the dust*, Psal. 119. 25. and will in exchange give us only his *light*, *his pleasant burden*, Matt. 11. 30. In a word, there will be no care left for us, but that of keeping our selves in a capacity of his: let us but secure our love to him, and we are ascertain'd that *all things shall work together for our good*, Rom. 8. 28.

Resignation and Contentment differ only as the cause and the effect.

13. To conclude, Resignation and Contentment are vertues not only of a near cognation and resemblance, but they are linked as the Cause and the Effect. Let us but make sure of Resignation, and Content will flow into us without our farther industry: as on the contrary whilst our wills are at defiance with God's, we shall always find things at as great defiance with ours. All our subtleties or industries will never mould them to our satisfactions, till we have moulded our selves into that pliant temper that we can cordially say, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*, 1 Sam. 3. 18.

The

The Cloſe.

THIS ſhort inſtitution of the *Art of Content* [illegible] not more naturally, or more deſirably draw to a concluſion, than in the reſort we have given it, in the boſom of divine *Providence*. The Roman conquerors as the laſt pitch of all their triumphs went to the Capitol, and laid their Garlands in the lap of *Jupiter*: but the Chriſtian has an eaſier way to triumph, to put his crown of thorns (for that is the trophy of his victories) within the arms of his gracious God; there lodge his fears, his wants, his ſorrows, and himſelf too, as in the beſt repoſitory.

The Chriſtian, like the Roman conquerors, as the laſt pitch of triumph, muſt lay their garland in the lap of their God.

2. The Goſpel command of *not caring for the morrow*, Matt. 6. 34. and being *careful for nothing*, Phil. 4. 6. nakedly propos'd, might ſeem the abandoning of us to all the calamities of life: but when we are directed to *caſt all our care* upon a gracious and all-powerful Parent, and are aſſur'd that *he cares for us*, 1 Pet. 5. 7. that *though a woman may forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion of the ſon of her womb, yet will he not forget* his children, *Iſai.* 49. 15. this will abundantly ſuperſede all cavil and objection. Whilſt wordly men truſt in an arm of fleſh, lay up *treaſure on earth*, a prey for *ruſt and moth*, Matt. 6. 19. and *a torment* to themſelves, *Jam.* 5. 3. the Chriſtian has omnipotence for his ſupport, and a *treaſure in heaven, where no thief approaches, nor moth corrupts*, Matt. 6. 20. Whilſt bold inquirers call in queſtion Gods ſecret will, oblige him to their ſub or ſupralapſarian ſchemes, their abſolute or conditional decrees, their grace foreſeen or predetermin'd; the pious man with awful acquieſcence ſubmits to that which is reveal'd: reſolves for ever to obey, but never to diſpute; as knowing that the belov'd Diſciple lean'd on his Maſters boſom; but 'tis the thiefs and traitors part to go about to rifle it.

'Tis the belov'd diſciples property, to lean on his Lords boſom.

3. 'Tis ſurely a modeſt demand in the behalf of God Almighty, that we ſhould allow him as much privilege in his world, as every Peaſant claims in his Cottage; to be Maſter there, and diſpoſe of his houſe-hold as he thinks beſt: to *ſay to this man, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to his ſervant, do this, and he doth it*, Matt. 8. 9. And if we would afford him this liberty, there would be an immediate end put to all clamour and complaint.

God may demand as much privilege in his World as a Peaſant claims in his Cottage.

4. We make it our daily prayer that the *will* of God *may be done in earth as it is in heaven*, with a ready, ſwift, and uninterrupted conſtancy. As 'tis Giantlike rebellion to ſet up our will againſt his, ſo it is mad perverſneſs to ſet it up againſt our own; be diſpleaſed that our requeſts are granted, and repine that his, and therewith our will is done. It were indeed not only good manners, but good policy, to obſerve the direction of the Heathen, and *follow God*: nor prejudge his determinations by ours; but in a modeſt ſuſpenſion of our thoughts, *hearken what the Lord God will ſay concerning us, for he will ſpeak peace unto his people, and to his Saints that they turn not again*, Pſal. 85. 8.

We pray that Gods will may be done; and 'tis a ſtrange perverſneſs to ſet up our will, at once againſt God's will and our own.

5. Or however upon ſurpriſe we may indulge to a paſſionate affection, and dote upon our illegitimate off-ſpring, our dearling guilts or follies, as *David* did upon that Child, who was the price of Murder and Adultery: yet when the brat is taken from us, when the *Child is dead*, it will become us to do as he did, riſe from our ſullen poſture on the earth, and *worſhip in the houſe of the Lord*, 2 Sam. 12. 20. It will behove us, as he ſays in another place, to *lay our hand upon our mouth, becauſe it was his doing*, Pſal. 30. 10. and with holy *Job* Chap. 40. 4. when charg'd with his murmurings, *Behold I am vile, what ſhall I anſwer? Once have I ſpoken, but I will not anſwer: yea twice, but I will proceed no farther.*

Eſpecially, to mourn when the dearling child is dead.

6. *Socrates* rightly ſaid of Contentment, oppoſing it to the riches of fortune and opinion, that 'tis the wealth of nature; for it gives every thing that we have learn'd to want, and really need: but Reſignation is the riches of Grace, beſtowing all things that a Chriſtian not only needs, but can deſire, even Almighty God himſelf. He indeed, as the Schoolmen teach, is the objective happineſs of the Creature; He who is the fountain of being, muſt be alſo of bleſſedneſs: and though this be only communicable to us, when we have put off that *fleſh which cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, and laid aſide that *corruption* which cannot *inherit incorruption*, 1 Cor. 15. yet even in this life, we may make approaches to that bleſſed ſtate, by acts of Reſignation and denial of our ſelves. It was the generous ſaying of *Socrates* being about to die unto his friend; O *Crito*, ſince it is the will of God, ſo let it be: *Anytus*

Contentment is the riches of nature, as oppos'd to thoſe of fortune and opinion.

and *Melitus* may kill me, but cannot hurt me. But ſuch a Reſignation, as 'tis infinitely a greater duty to a Chriſtian, ſo it is alſo a more firm ſecurity. In that caſe 'tis not the *Martyr*, but *Jeſus of Nazareth* who is thus perſecuted, and he who attacks him will find *it hard to kick againſt the pricks*, Act. 9. 5.

It was the utmoſt inſtance of profligate ſenſuality to murmur for want of leeks and onions.

7. There could not be a greater inſtance of the profligate ſenſuality of the *Iſraelites*, than that they murmured for want of *leeks and onions*, Numb. 11. 5. when they ate Angels food, and had bread rain'd down from heaven. 'Tis impoſſible for the ſoul that is ſenſible of God Almighties favour, to repine at any earthly preſſure. *The Lord is my ſhepherd*, ſaid *David*, *therefore can I lack nothing*, Pſal. 23. 1. And, *thou haſt put gladneſs into my heart, more than when their corn and wine, and oyl increaſed*, Pſal. 4. 7. and in paſſionate raptures he cries out, *Pſal.* 73. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire in compariſon of thee. My fleſh and my heart faileth: but God is the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* And likewiſe *Pſal.* 46. 1. *God is our hope and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved: and though the hills be carried into the midſt of the ſea. Though the waters thereof rage and ſwell, and though the mountains ſhake at the tempeſt of the ſame.* If *God* be *in the midſt of us, we ſhall not be remov'd, he will help us, and that right early.* Let us therefore poſſeſs our ſelves of this ſupport, and as the Prophet adviſes, *Iſai.* 8. 12. *neither fear, nor be afraid*, in any exigence how great ſoever; but *be ſtill and quiet, and ſanctify the Lord of hoſts himſelf, and let him be our fear, and let him be our dread.*

FINIS.

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THE

LIVELY ORACLES

GIVEN TO US,

OR THE

CHRISTIANS BIRTH-RIGHT

and Duty in the Cuſtody and Uſe of the

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

THE PREFACE.

IN the Treatise of the Government of the Tongue publish'd by me heretofore, I had occasion to take notice among the exorbitancies of that Unruly Part, which sets on fire the whole course of nature, and its self is set on fire from hell, James 3. 6. of the impious vanity prevailing in this Age, whereby men play with sacred things, and exercise their wit upon those Scriptures by which they shall be judg'd at the last day, John 12. 48.

The incidental reflections in the treatise of the Government of the Tongue, of the abuse of Scripture,

But that holy Book not only suffering by the petulancy of the Tongue, but the malice of the heart, out of the abundance whereof the mouth speaks, Matt. 12. 34. and also from that irreligion, prepossession, and supiness which the pursuit of sensual pleasures certainly produces; the mischief is too much diffus'd and deeply rooted to be controul'd by a few casual reflections. I have therefore thought it necessary, both in regard of the dignity and importance of the subject, as also the prevalence of the opposition, to attempt a professt and particular vindication of the holy Scriptures, by displaying their native excellence and beauty, and enforcing the veneration and obedience that is to be paid unto them.

were insufficient against so prevailing a mischief.

This I design'd to do in my usual method, by an address to the affections of the Reader; soliciting the several passions of love, hope, fear, shame and sorrow, which either the Majesty of God in his sublime being, his goodness deriv'd to us, or our ingratitude return'd to him, could actuate in persons not utterly obdurate.

A more particular vindication is design'd by an address to affections.

But whereas men, when they have learn'd to do amiss, quickly dispute and dictate; I found my self concern'd to pass somtimes within the verge of controversy, and to discourse upon the principles of Reason, and deductions from Testimony, which in the most important transactions of human life are justly taken for evidence. In which whole performance I have studied to avoid the entanglements of Sophistry, and the ambition of unintelligible quotations; and kept my self within the reach of the unlearned Christian Reader, to whose uses my labours have been ever dedicated.

And also to Reason.

All that I require, is that men would bring as much readiness to entertain the holy Scriptures, as they do to the reading prophane Authors; I am asham'd to say, as they do to the incentives of vice and folly; nay, to the libels and invectives that are levell'd against the Scriptures.

'Tis desired that men would be as equal in the cause of the Scripture, as they are in secular concerns.

If I obtain this, I Will make no doubt that I shall gain a farther point; that from the perusal of my imperfect conceptions, the Reader will proceed to the study of the Scriptures themselves: there taste and see how gracious the Lord is, Psalm 34. 8. and, as the Angel commanded Saint John. Rev. 10. 9. eat the Book; where he will experimentally find the words of David verified, Psalm. 19. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. The Law of the Lord is an undefiled Law, converting the Soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom to the simple. The Statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoyce the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean and endureth for ever, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desir'd are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than hony and the honycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant taught, and in keeping of them there is great reward.

This will produce this advantageous effect, that the Reader will be led to the study of the Scriptures themselves.

It is said of Moses, Exod. 34. 29. that having receiv'd the Law from God, and converst with him in Mount Sina forty days together, his face shone and had a brightness fixt upon it that dazled the beholders; a pledg and short essay not only of the appearance at Mount Tabor, Matt. 17. 1. where at the Transfiguration he again was seen in glory: but of that greater and yet future change when he shall see indeed his God face to face, and share his glory unto all eternity. The same Divine Goodness gives still his Law to every one of us. Let us receive it with due regard and veneration; converse with him therein, instead of forty days, during our whole lives; and so anticipate and certainly assure our interest in that great Transfiguration, when all the Faithful shall put off their mortal flesh, be translated from glory to glory, eternally behold their God, see him as he is, and so enjoy him.

Moses in receiving the Law had a brightness fixt upon his face, and the Gospel has the like transfiguring power.

Familiarity is exceedingly apt to assimilate, and surely none can have so great an influence as a conversation with God.

Conversation has every where an assimilating power, we are generally such as are the men and books, and business that we deal with: but surely no familiarity has so great an influence on Life and Manners, as when men hear God speaking to them in this World. That word which the Apostle, Heb. 4. 12. declares to be quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joynts and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

All other books of curious Arts shall be burnt in the general conflagration.

The time will come when all our books, however recommended for subtility of discourse, exactness of method, variety of matter, or eloquence of language; when all our curious arts, *like those mention'd* Acts 19. 19. shall be brought forth, and burnt before all men: *when the great Book of nature, and* heaven it self shall depart as a scroul roll'd together, *Rev. 6. 14. At which important season 'twill be more to purpose to have studied well, that is, transcrib'd in practice this one Book, than to have run through all besides;* for then the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and the Books shall be open'd, and another Book shall be open'd which is the Book of Life, and the dead shall be judg'd out of those things which were written in the Books acording to their works, *Rev. 20. 12.*

They who will not hear Moses and the Prophets, will be convinc'd by no miracle

In vain shall men allege the want of due conviction, that they did not know how penal it would be, to disregard the Sanctions of Gods Law, which they would have had enforc'd by immediate miracle; the apparition of one sent from the other world, who might testify of the place of torment. *This expectation the Scripture charges every where with the guilt of tempting God, and indeed it really involves this insolent proposal, that the Almighty should be obliged to break his own Laws, that men might be prevailed with to keep his. But should he think fit to comply herein, the condescention would be as successless in the event, as 'tis unreasonable in the offer. Our Saviour assures,* that they who hear not *Moses* and the Prophets, *the instructions and commands laid down in holy Scripture, would not be wrought upon by any other method,* would not be perswaded *by that which they allow for irresistible conviction,* though one rose again from the dead, *Luke 16. 31.*

THE CONTENTS.

THE LIVELY ORACLES GIVEN TO US, OR THE CHRISTIANS BIRTH-RIGHT and Duty in the Custody and Use of the HOLY SCRIPTURE.

SECT. I.

The several Methods of God's Communicating the Knowledge of Himself.

1. GOD, as he is invisible to human eyes, so is he unfathomable by human understandings; the perfection of his nature, and the impotency of ours, setting us at too great a distance to have any clear perception of him. Nay, so far are we from a full comprehension, that we can discern nothing at all of him, but by his own light; those discoveries he hath been pleas'd to make of himself. *The knowledge of God is to be owed to the discoveries he makes.*

2. Those have been of several sorts; The first was by infusion in man's creation, when God interwove into man's very constitution and being the notions and apprehensions of a Deity: and at the same instant when he breath'd into him a living soul, imprest on it that native Religion, which taught him to know and reverence his Creator, which we may call the instinct of humanity. Nor were those principles dark and confus'd, but clear and evident, proportionable to the ends they were design'd to, which were not only to contemplate the nature, but to do the will of God; Practice being even in the state of innocence preferable before an unactive speculation. *The first intimation of the Deity was by infusion at man's creation.*

3. But this Light being soon eclips'd by *Adam*'s disobedience, there remain'd to his benighted posterity only some faint glimmerings, which were utterly insufficient to guide them to their end, without fresh aids, and renew'd manifestations of God to them. It pleas'd God therefore to repair this ruin, and by frequent revelations to communicate himself to the Patriarchs in the first Ages of the World; afterwards to Prophets, and other holy men; till at last he revealed himself yet more illustriously *in the face of Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. 4. 6. *This light being eclipst by Adam's fall, was supplied by revelation.*

4. This is the one great comprehensive revelation wherein all the former were involv'd, and to which they pointed; the whole mystery of Godliness being compriz'd in this of *God*'s being *manifested in the flesh*, and the consequents thereof, 1 Tim. 3. 16. whereby our Saviour as he effected our reconciliation with God by the sacrifice of his death; so he declar'd both that, and all things else that it concern'd man to know in order to bliss in his doctrine and holy life. And this *Teacher* being not only *sent from God*, John 3. 2. but being himself God blessed for ever; it cannot be that his instructions can want any supplement. Yet that they might not want attestation neither to the incredulous world, he confirm'd them by the repeated miracles of his life, and by the testimony of those who saw the more irrefragable conviction of his Resurrection and Ascension. And that they also might not want credit and enforce- *Which recapitulates into that great Mystery of Godliness, God manifested in flesh.*

enforcement, the holy Spirit set to his seal, and by his miraculous descent upon the Apostles, both asserted their commission, and enabled them for the discharge of it, by all gifts necessary for the propagating the Faith of Christ over the whole world.

This when received, is a trust to be transmitted to posterity.

5. These were the ways by which God was pleased to reveal himself to the Forefathers of our Faith, and that not only for their sakes, but ours also, to whom they were to derive those divine dictates they had receiv'd. Saint *Stephen* tell us, those under the Law *receiv'd the lively Oracles* to deliver down to their posterity, *Acts* 7. 38. And those under the Gospel, who receiv'd yet more lively Oracles from him who was both the Word and the Life, did it for the same purpose; to transmit it to us upon whom the ends of the world are come. By this all need of repeated Revelations is superseded, the faithful deriving of the former, being sufficient to us for *all things that appertain to life and godliness*, 2 Pet. 1. 3.

A means of this conveiance is the vouchsafement of holy Scripture.

6. And for this God (whose care is equal for all successions of men) hath graciously provided, by causing Holy Scriptures to be writ; by which he has deriv'd on every succeeding Age the illuminations of the former. And for that purpose endowed the Writers not only with that moral fidelity requisite to the truth of history, but with a Divine Spirit, proportionable to the great design of fixing an immutable rule for Faith and Manners. And to give us the fuller security herein, he has chosen no other Penmen of the New Testament, than those who were the first oral Promulgers of our Christian Religion; so that they have left to us the very same doctrine they taught the Primitive Christians; and he that acknowledges them Divinely inspir'd in what they preach'd, cannot doubt them to be so in what they writ. So that we all may enjoy virtually and effectually that wish of the devout Father, who desir'd to be Saint *Paul*s Auditor: for he that hears any of his Epistles read, is as really spoke to by St. *Paul*, as those who were within the sound of his voice. *Thus God, who in times past spake at sundry times, and in divers manners to our Fathers by the Prophets, and in the latter days by his Son*, Heb. 1, 1, 2. continues still to speak to us by these inspir'd Writers; and what Christ once said to his Disciples in relation to our preaching, is no less true of their writings: *He that despiseth you, despiseth me*, Luke 10. 16. All the contempt that is at any time flung on these sacred Writings, rebounds higher, and finally devolves on the first Author of those doctrines, whereof these are the Registers and Transcripts.

The contempt of which is defiance to Almighty God, and most unpardonable in Christians.

7. But this is a guilt which one would think peculiar to Infidels and Pagans, and not incident to any who had in their Baptism listed themselves under Christ's banner: yet I fear I may say, of the two parties, the Scripture has met with the worst treatment from the latter. For if we measure by the frequency and variety of injuries, I fear the Christians will appear to have out-vied Heathens: these bluntly disbelieve them, neglect, nay perhaps scornfully deride them. Alas, Christians do this and more; they not only put contempts, but tricks upon the Scripture, wrest and distort it to justify all their wild fancies, or secular designs; and subborn its Patronage to those things it forbids and tells us that God abhors.

The undervaluing of this holy Book is the most universal cause of the depravation of manners.

8. Indeed so many are the abuses we offer it, that he that considers them would scarce think we own'd it for the words of a sensible man, much less of the great omniscient God. And I believe 'twere hard to assign any one so comprehensive and efficacious cause of the universal depravation of manners, as the disvaluing of this Divine Book, which was design'd to regulate them. It were therefore a work worthy another inspired writing, to attempt the rescue of this, and recover it to its just estimate. Yet alas, could we hope for that, we have scoffers who would as well despise the New as the Old; and like the Husbandmen in the Gospel, *Matt.* 21. 36. would answer such a succession of messages by repeating the same injuries.

Human Oratory cannot hope to succeed where Divine has fail'd.

9. To such as these 'tis I confess vain for man to address, nay 'twere insolence to expect that human Oratory would succeed where the Divine fails; yet the spreading infection of these renders it necessary to administer antidotes to others. And besides, though (God be blest) all are not of this form, yet there are many who, though not arriv'd to this contempt, yet want some degrees of that just reverence they owe the sacred Scriptures, who give confus'd general assent to them as the word of God, but afford them not a consideration and respect answerable to such an acknowledgment. To such as these, I shall hope it may not be utterly vain to attempt the exciting of those drowsy notions that lie unactive in them; by presenting them some considerations concerning the excellence and use of the Scripture: which being all but necessary consequences of that principle they are suppos'd to own, *viz.* that they are God's Word, I cannot much question their assent to the speculative part: I wish I could as probably assure my self of the practick.

10. Indeed

10. Indeed were there nothing else to be said in behalf of holy Writ, but that it is God's Word, that were enough to command the most awful regard to it. And therefore it is but just we make that the first and principal consideration in our present discourse. But then 'tis impossible that that can want others to attend it; since whatsoever God saith, is in all respects compleatly good. I shall therefore to that of its Divine original add secondly the consideration of its subject Matter; thirdly, of its excellent and no less diffusive end and design; and fourthly, of its exact propriety and fitness to that design: which are all such qualifications, that where they concur, nothing more can be requir'd to commend a writing to the esteem of rational men. And upon all these tests, notwithstanding the cavil of the Romanists and others, whose force we shall examine with the unhappy issue of contrary counsels, this law of God will be found to answer the Psalmist's character, *Psal.* 19. 7. *The Law of God is perfect*: and 'twill appear that the custody and use thereof is the Birth-right and Duty of every Christian. All which severals being faithfully deduced, it will only remain that I add such cautions as will be necessary to the due performance of the aforesaid Duty, and our being in some degree render'd perfect, as this Law of God, and the Author thereof himself is perfect, *Matt.* 5. 48.

This therefore is to be the first and principal consideration.

Sect. II.

The Divine Original, Endearments and Authority of the Holy Scriptures.

1. MENS Judgments are so apt to be biast by their affections, that we often find them readier to consider who speaks, than what is spoken: a temper very unsafe, and the principle of great injustice in our inferiour transactions with men: yet here there are very few of us that can wholly divest our selves of it, whereas, when we deal with God (in whom alone an implicit faith may securely be repos'd) we are nice and wary, bring our scales and measures, will take nothing upon his word which holds not weight in our own balance. 'Tis true, he needs not our partiality to be *justified in his sayings*, Psal. 51. 4. *his words are pure, even as the silver tried seven times in the fire*, Psal. 12. 6. able to pass the strictest test that right reason (truly so called) can put them to. Yet it shews a great perverseness in our nature, that we who so easily resign our understandings to fallible men, stand thus upon our guard against God; make him dispute for every inch he gains on us; nor will afford him what we daily grant to any credible man, to receive an affirmation upon trust of his veracity.

In human affairs the principal motive of credibility is the credit of the speaker.

2. I am far from contradicting our Saviour's Precept, of *Search the Scripture*; John 7. or Saint *Paul*'s, of *proving all things*, 1 Thess. 5. 21. we cannot be too industrious in our inquest after truth, provided we still reserve to God the decisive vote, and humbly acquiesce in his sence, how distant soever from our own; so that when we consult Scripture (I may add Reason either) 'tis not to resolve us whether God be to be believed or no in what he has said, but whether he hath said such and such things: for if we are convinc'd he hath, Reason as well as Religion commands our assent.

When we are commanded to search the Scripture, 'tis in reverence to the meaning, and not the truth of what is said.

3. Whatever therefore God has said, we are to pay it a reverence meerly upon the account of its Author, over and above what the excellence of the matter exacts: and to this we have all inducements as well as obligation: there being no motives to render the words of men estimable to us, which are not eminently and transcendently appliable to those of God.

Whatever God has said we are to pay it a reverence merely upon the account of its author.

4. Those motives we may reduce to four: first, the Authority of the Speaker; secondly, his Kindness; thirdly, his Wisdom; and fourthly his Truth. First, for that of Authority: that may be either native, or acquired; the native is that of a parent, which is such a charm of observance, that we see *Solomon*, when he would impress his counsels, assumes the person of a Father; *Hear O my children the instructions of a Father*, Prov. 4. 1. And generally through that whole Book he uses the compellation of my Son, as the greatest endearment to engage attention and reverence. Nay so indispensible was the obligation of children in this respect, that

He speaks with the authority of a Parent.

we see the contumacious child that would not hearken to the advice of his Parents, was by God himself adjudged to death, *Deut.* 21. 20.

The father not only of our persons, but also of our nature.

5. Nor have only Gods but mens Laws exacted that filial reverence to the dictates of Parents. But certainly no Parent can pretend such a title to it as God who is not only the immediate Father of our persons, but the original Father of our very nature; not only of our flesh, but of our spirits also, *Heb.* 12. 9. So that the Apostle's Antithesis in that place is as properly applied to counsels as corrections; and we may as rightly infer, that if we give reverence to the advices of our earthly Parents, *much more ought we subject our selves to this Father of our spirits.* And we have the very same reason wherewith to enforce it: for *the Fathers of our flesh do* as often dictate, as *correct according to their pleasures,* prescribe to their children not according to the exact measures of right and wrong, but after that humor which most predominates in themselves. But God always directs his admonitions to our profit, *that we be partakers of his holiness,* Heb. 12. 11. So that we are as unkind to our selves, as irreverend towards him, whenever we let any of his words fall to the ground; whose claim to this part of our reverence is much more irrefragable than that of our natural Parents.

He has besides, the authority of a King, and Prince.

6. But besides this native Authority there is also an acquired; and that we may distinguish into two sorts: the one of dominion, the other of reputation. To the first kind belong that of Princes, Magistrates, Masters, or any that have coercive power over us. And our own interest teaches us not to slight the words of these, who can so much to our cost second them with deeds. Now God has all these titles of jurisdiction; He is the great King, *Psal.* 48. 2. Nor was it only a complement of the Psalmists; for himself owns the stile, *I am a great King,* Mal. 1. *He is the Judge of all the World,* Gen. 18. yea that *Ancient of days,* before whom the Books were open'd, *Dan.* 7. 10. He is our Lord and Master by right, both of Creation and redemption; and this Christ owns even in his state of inanition; yea, when he was about the most servile employment, the washing of his Disciples feet, when he was most literally in the form of a servant; yet he scruples not to assert his right to that opposite title: *You call me Master, and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am;* John 13. Nor are these empty names, but effectively attended with all the power they denote. Yet so stupid are we, that whilst we awfully receive the dictates of our earthly Superiours, we slight and neglect the Oracles of that God who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. When a Prince speaks, we are apt to cry out with *Herod*'s Flatterers, *The voice of a God, and not of a man,* Acts 12. Yet when it is indeed the voice of God, we chuse to listen to any thing else rather than it. But let us sadly remember, that notwithstanding our contempts, this word shall (as our Saviour tells us) *judge us at the last day,* John 12. 48.

Of his inherent excellencies.

7. A second sort of acquir'd Authority is that of reputation. When a man is famed for some extraordinary excellencies, whether moral or intellectual, men come with appetites to his discourses, greedily suck them in, nor need such a one bespeak attention; his very name has done it for him, and prepossest him of his Auditors regard. Thus the Rabbies among the Jews, the Philosophers among the Greeks, were listened to as Oracles, and to cite them was (by their admiring Disciples) thought a concluding Argument. Nay, under Christianity, this admiration of mens persons has been so inordinate, that it has crumbled Religion away in little insignificant parties; whilst not only *Paul, Apollo* or *Cephas,* but names infinitely inferiour, have become the distinctive characters of Sects and separate Communions. So easily alas are we charm'd by our prepossessions, and with itching ears run in quest of those doctrines, which the fame of their Authors, rather than the evidence of truth, commends to us.

And where these motives all concur, their obligation is so much the greater.

8. And hath God done nothing to get him a repute among us? has he no excellencies to deserve our esteem? is he not worthy to prescribe to his own creatures? If we think yes, why is he the only person to be disregarded? or why do we so unseasonably depart from our own humor, as not to give his Word a reverence proportionable to that we pretend for him; nay, which we actually pay to men of like passions with our selves? A contempt so absurd as well as impious, that we have not the example of any the most barbarous people to countenance us. For though some of them have made very wild mistakes in the choice of their Deities, yet they have all agreed in this common principle, that whatever those Deities said, was to be receiv'd with all possible veneration; yea, such a deference gave they to all significations of the Divine will, that as they would undertake no great enterprize without consulting their Auguries; so upon any inauspicious signs they relinquish'd their

attempts.

attempts. And certainly if we had the same reverence for the true God which they had for the false, we should as frequently consult him. We may do it with much more ease and certainty: we need not trust to the entrails of Beasts, or motion of Birds: we need not go to *Delphos*, or the Lybian *Hammon* for the resolving our doubts: but what *Moses* said to *Israel* is very applicable to us, *the Word is nigh thee*, Deut. 30. 14. That word which *David* made his *Counsellour*, Psal. 119. 24. his *Comforter*, verse 50. his *Treasure*, verse 72. his *Study*, verse 99. And had we those awful apprehensions of God which he had, we should pay the like reverence to his Word. Did we well ponder how many titles of Authority he has over us, we should surely be asham'd to deny that respect to him in whom they all conspire, which we dare not deny to them separately in human Superiours.

A second motive for the esteem of words is the kindness of the speaker.

9. A second motive to esteem mens words, is the kindness of the speaker. This has such a fascinating power, as nothing but extream ill nature can resist. When a man is assur'd of the kindness of him that speaks, whatever is spoken is taken in good part. This is it that distinguishes the admonitions of a friend from the reproaches of an enemy; and we daily in common conversation receive those things with contentment and applause from an intimate and familiar, which if spoken by a stranger or enemy, would be despis'd or stomach'd. So insinuating a thing is kindness, that where it has once got it self believ'd, nothing it says after is disputed; it supples the mind, and makes it ductile and pliant to any impressions.

Human kindness bears no proportion to the Divine.

10. But what human kindness is there that can come in any competition with the Divine? it surpasses that of the nearest and dearest relations; *Mothers may forget, yet will I not forget thee*, Isai. 49. 15. And the Psalmist found it experimentally true, *When my Father and my Mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up*, Psal. 27. 10. The tenderest bowels compared to his, are adamant and flint: so that 'tis a most proper Epithet the Wise man gives him, *O Lord, thou lover of souls*, Wisd. 11. 26. Nor is this affection meerly mental, but it attests it self by innumerable effects. The effects of love are all reducible to two heads, doing and suffering; and by both these God has most eminently attested his love to us.

Whether we consider our souls or bodies, our creation or redemption.

11. For the first, we cannot look either on our bodies or our souls, on the whole Universe about us, or that better world above us; but we shall in each see *the Lord hath done great things for us*, Psal. 114. Nay, not only our enjoyments, but even the capacity to enjoy, is his bounty. Had not he drawn mankind out of his original clay, what had we been concern'd in all the other works of his Creation? So that if we put any value either upon what we have or what we are, we cannot but account our selves so much indebted to this his active love. And though the passive was not practicable by the Divine Nature simply and apart, yet that we might not want all imaginable evidences of his love, he who was God blessed for ever, link'd his impassible to our passible nature; assum'd our humanity, that he might espouse our sorrows, and was born on purpose that he might die for us. So that sure we may say in his own words, *greater love than this hath no man*, John 15. 13.

And 'tis very hard if such obligations cannot rescue his word from contempt.

12. And now 'tis very hard, if such an unparallel'd love in God may not as much affect us, as the slight benefactions of every ordinary friend, if it cannot so much recommend him to our regard, as to rescue his word from contempt, and dispose us to receive impressions from it; especially when his very speaking is a new act of his kindness, and design'd to our greatest advantage.

We pay a respect to a friends discourse, though weak and irrational, which cannot happen in God.

13. But if all he has done and suffer'd for us cannot obtain him so much from us, we must surely confess, our disingenuity is as superlative as his love. For in this instance we have no plea for our selves. The discourses of men, 'tis true, may sometimes be so weak and irrational, that though kindness may suggest pity, it cannot reverence: but this can never happen in God, whose wisdom is as infinite as his love. He talks not at our vain rate who often talk only for talking sake: but his words are directed to the most important ends, and addrest in such a manner as befits him in whom are *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Col. 2. 3. And this is our third consideration, the wisdom of the speaker.

Human wisdom can attract scholars and admirers, which has no value if compar'd with God's.

14. How attractive a thing Wisdom is, we may observe in the instance of *the queen of Sheba*, who *came from the utmost parts of the earth*, as Christ says *Matt.* 12. 42. *to hear the Wisdom of Solomon*. And the like is noted of the *Greek* Sages, that they were addrest to from all parts, by persons of all ranks and qualities, to hear their Lectures. And indeed the rational nature of man do's by a kind of sympathetick motion close with whatever hath the stamp of reason upon it. But alas, what is the profoundest wisdom of men, compar'd with that of God? He is the essential reason; and all that man can pretend to, is but an emanation from him; a ray of his

Sun, a drop of his Ocean: which as he gives, so he can also take away. He can infatuate the most subtil Designers; and (as he says of himself) *makes the diviners mad, turns the wise men back, and makes their wisdom foolishness*, Isai. 44. 25.

'Tis impious folly to idolize human wisdom and despise Divine.

15. How impious a folly is it then in us, to Idolize human Wisdom with all its imperfections, and despise the Divine? yet this every man is guilty of who is not attracted to the study of sacred Writ by the supereminent wisdom of its Author. For such men must either affirm that God has not such a supereminency; or that, though he has in himself, he hath not exerted it in this Writing: the former is down-right blasphemy; and truly the latter is the same, a little varied. For that any thing but what is exactly wise, can proceed from infinite wisdom, is too absurd for any man to imagine. And therefore he that charges God's Word with defect of wisdom, must interpretatively charge God so too. For though 'tis true, a wise man may sometimes speak foolishly; yet that happens through that mixture of ignorance or passion, which is in the most knowing of mortals: but in God, who is a pure Act, and essential Wisdom, that is an impossible supposition.

That Word which is intended to make wise to salvation.

16. Nay, indeed it were to tax him of folly beyond what is incident to any sensible man, who will still proportion his instruments to the work he designs. Should we not conclude him mad, that should attempt to fell a mighty Oak with a Penknife, or stop a Torrent with a wisp of straw? And sure their conceptions are not much more reverend of God, who can suppose that a writing design'd by him for such important ends, as the *making men wise unto salvation*, 2 Tim. 3. 15. *the casting down all that exalts it self against obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. 10. 5. should it self be foolish and weak: or that he should give it those Attributes of being *sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow*, Heb. 4. 12. if its discourses were so flat and insipid, as some in this profane Age would represent them.

Though it pretends not to teach the wisdom of this world, it guides in a better.

17. 'Tis true indeed, 'tis not, as the Apostle speaks, the *wisdom of this world*, 1 Cor. 2. 6. The Scripture teaches us not the arts of undermining Governments, defrauding and circumventing our brethren; but it teaches us that which would tend much more even to our temporal felicity; and as reason prompts us to aspire to happiness, so it must acknowledge, that is the highest wisdom which teaches us to attain it.

The Scripture is recommended also by the veracity of its Author

18. And as the holy Scripture is thus recommended to us by the Wisdom of its Author, so in the last place it is by his truth, without which the other might rather raise our jealousy than our reverence. For wisdom without sincerity degenerates into serpentine guile, and we rather fear to be ensnar'd than hope to be advantag'd by it. The most subtile addresses, and most cogent arguments prevail not upon us, where we suspect some insidious design. But where wisdom and fidelity meet in the same person, we do not only attend, but confide in his councels. And this qualification is most eminently in God. *The children of men are deceitful upon the weights.* Psal. 62. 9. Much guile often lurks indiscernibly under the fairest appearances; but God's veracity is as essentially himself as his wisdom, and he can no more deceive us, than he can be deceiv'd himself. *He is not a man that he should lie*, Num. 23. 19. He designs not (as men often do) to sport himself with our credulity, and raise hopes which he never means to satisfy: *he says not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain*, Isai. 45 19. but all his *promises are Yea and Amen*, 2 Cor. 1. 20. he is perfectly sincere in all the proposals he makes in his Word, which is a most rational motive for us to advert to it, not only with reverence but love.

We must be very inexcusable, if so many motives combin'd cannot prevail with us

19. And now when all these motives have thus combin'd the authority, the kindness, the wisdom, the veracity of the speaker, what can be requir'd more to render his words of weight with us? if this our fourfold cord will not draw us, we have sure the strength, not of men but of that Legion we read of in the Gospel, *Mark* 5. 9. For these are so much the cords of a man, so adapted to our natures, nay to our constant usage in other things, that we must put off much of our humanity, disclaim the common measures of mankind, if we be not attracted by them. For I dare appeal to the breast of any sober, industrious man, whether in case a person, who he were sure had all the forementioned qualifications, should recommend to him some rules as infallible for the certain doubling or trebling his estate, he would not think them worth the pursuing; nay, whether he would not plod and study on them, till he comprehended the whole Art. And shall we then when God, in whom all these qualifications are united, and that in their utmost transcendencies, shall we, I say, think him below our regard, when he proposes the improving our interest, not by the scanty proportions of two or three; but in such as he intimated to

Abraham,

Abraham, when he shew'd him the Stars, as the representative of his numerous offspring, *Gen.* 15. 5. when he teaches us that highest, and yet most certain Alchymy of refining and multiplying our enjoyments, and then perpetuating them?

20. All this God do's in Scripture, and we must be stupidly improvident, if we will take no advantage by it. It was once the complaint of Christ to the *Jews*, *I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive*, John 5. 43. And what was said by him the eternal essential Word, is no less applicable to the Written; which coming in the name and upon the message of God, is despis'd and slighted, and every the lightest composure of men preferr'd before it, As if that signature of Divinity it carries, served rather for a Brand to stigmatize and defame, than adorn and recommend it. A contempt which strikes immediately at God himself, whose resentments of it, though for the present supprest by his long-suffering, will at last break out upon all who persevere so to affront him in a *judgment worthy of God*, Wisd. 12. 26.

In secular occasions we are more easy, if one comes in his own name, him we receive.

21. But after all that has been said, I foresee some may say, that I have all this while but beaten the air, have built upon a principle which some flatly deny, others doubt of, and have run away with a supposition that the Bible is of Divine Original, without any attempt of proof. To such as these I might justly enough object the extream hard measure they offer to Divinity above all other Sciences. For in those they still allow some fundamental maxims, which are presupposed without proof; but in this they admit of no *Postulata*, no granted principle on which to superstruct. If the same rigour should be extended to secular cases, what a damp would it strike upon commerce? For example, a man expects fair dealing from his neighbours upon the strength of those common notions of Justice he presumes writ in all mens hearts: but according to this measure, he must first prove to every man he deals with, that such notions there are, and that they are obligatory: that the wares expos'd to sale are his own; that Dominion is not founded in Grace, or that he is in that state, and so has a property to confer upon another; that the person dealt with, pays a just price; do's it in good money; and that it is his own; or that he is in the state of Grace; or need not be so, to justify his purchase, and at this rate the Market will be as full of nice questions as the Schools. But because complaints and retortions are the common refuge of causes that want better Arguments, I shall not insist here; but proceed to a defence of the question'd Assertion, that the Bible is the Word of God.

To suppose and take as granted the Divine Original of the Holy Scripture, is thought to be begging the question.

22. In which I shall proceed by these degrees. First, I shall lay down the plain grounds upon which Christians believe it. Secondly, I shall compare those with those of less credibility which have generally satisfied mankind in other things of the like nature. And thirdly, I shall consider whether those who are dissatisfied with those grounds, would not be equally so with any other way of attestation.

That the Bible is the Word of God, is evinc'd by several ways of proof.

23. Before I enter upon the first of these, I desire it may be consider'd, that matters of fact are not capable of such rigorous demonstrative evidences, as mathematical propositions are. To render a thing fit for rational belief, there is no more to be requir'd, but that the motives for it do over-poise those against it; and in that degree they do so, so is the belief stronger or weaker.

Such as are to be expected in matters of fact.

24. Now the motives of our belief in the present case, are such as are extrinsick, or intrinsick to the Scriptures; of which the extrinsick are first, and preparative to the other; and indeed all that can reasonably be insisted on to a gain-sayer, who must be suppos'd no competent judge of the latter. But as to the forms, I shall adventure to say, that the Divine Original of the Scripture hath as great grounds of credibility as can be expected in any thing of this kind. For whether God inspir'd the Pen-men of Holy Writ, is matter of fact, and being so, is capable of no other external evidence but that of testimony: and that matter of fact being also in point of time so remote from us, can be judg'd of only by a series of Testimonies deriv'd from that Age wherein the Scriptures were written to this: and the more credible the Testifiers, and the more universal the testimony; so much the more convincing are they to all considering men.

Which can only be proved by Testimony.

25. And this attestation the Scripture hath in the highest circumstances, it having been witnessed to in all Ages, and in those Ages by all persons that could be presum'd to know any thing of it. Thus the Old Testament was own'd by the whole Nation of the *Jews*, as the writings of men inspir'd by God, and that with such evidence of their mission, as abundantly satisfied those of that Age, of their being so inspir'd; and they deriv'd those Writings with that attestation to their posterity. Now that those of the first Ages were not deceiv'd, is as morally certain as any

Which attestation the Scripture has with great advantage.

thing can be ſuppos'd. For in the firſt part of the Bible is contain'd the hiſtory of thoſe miracles wherewith God reſcued that people out of *Egypt*, and inſtated them in *Canaan*. Now if they who liv'd at that time, knew that ſuch miracles never were done, 'tis impoſſible they could receive an evident Fable as an inſpir'd Truth. No ſingle perſon, much leſs a whole Nation can be ſuppos'd ſo ſtupid. But if indeed they were eye-witneſſes of thoſe miracles, they might with very good reaſon conclude, that the ſame *Moſes* who was by God impower'd to work them, was ſo alſo for the relating them; as alſo all thoſe precedent events from the Creation down to that time, which are recorded by him.

Particularly the Law of Moſes.

26. So alſo for the preceptive parts of thoſe Books, thoſe that ſaw thoſe formidable ſolemnities, with which they were firſt publiſhed, had ſure little temptation to doubt that they were the dictates of God, when written. Now if they could not be deceiv'd themſelves, 'tis yet leſs imaginable that they ſhould conſpire to impoſe a cheat upon their poſterities; nor indeed were the *Jews* of ſo eaſy a credulity, that 'tis at all probable the ſucceeding Generations would have been ſo impos'd on: their humor was ſtubborn enough, and the precepts of their Law ſevere and burdenſome enough to have tempted them to have caſt off the yoke, had it not been bound upon them by irreſiſtible convictions of its coming from God. But beſides this Tradition of their Elders, they had the advantage of living under a Theocracy, the immediate guidance of God; Prophets daily rais'd up among them, to foretell events, to admoniſh them of their duty, and reprove their backſlidings: yet even theſe gave the deference to the written Word; nay, made it the teſt by which to try true inſpirations from falſe: *To the Law and to the Teſtimony: if they ſpeak not according to it, there is no light in them*, Iſai. 8. 20. So that the veneration which they had before acquir'd, was ſtill anew excited by freſh inſpirations, which both atteſted the old, and became new parts of their Canon.

And Prophetical writings, who have a great confirmation: by their completion and the care of the Jews in the cuſtody of the Scripture, and the many verſions are farther ſepiments.

27. Nor could it be eſteem'd a ſmall confirmation to the Scriptures, to find in ſucceeding Ages the ſignal accompliſhments of thoſe Prophecies which were long before regiſtred in thoſe Books: for nothing leſs than Divine Power and Wiſdom could foretell, and alſo verify them. Upon theſe grounds the *Jews* univerſally through all ſucceſſions receiv'd the Books of the Old Teſtament as Divine Oracles, and lookt upon them as the greateſt truſt that could be committed to them: and accordingly were ſo ſcrupulouſly vigilant in conſerving them, that their *Maſorits* numbred not only the ſections, but the very words, nay letters, that no fraud or inadvertency might corrupt or defalk the leaſt Iota of what they eſteem'd ſo ſacred. A farther teſtimony and ſepiment to which, were the Samaritan, Chaldee, and Greek verſions: which being made uſe of in the Synagogues of *Jews*, in their diſperſions, and the *Samaritans* at *Sichem*, could not at thoſe diſtances receive a uniform alteration, and any other would be of no effect. Add to this, that the Original exemplar of the Law was laid up in the Sanctuary, that the Prince was to have a Copy of it always by him, and tranſcribe it with his own hand; that every *Jew* was to make it his conſtant diſcourſe and meditation, teach it his children, and wear part of it upon his hands and forehead. And now ſure 'tis impoſſible to imagine any matter of fact to be more carefully deduced or irrefragably teſtified, nor any thing believed upon ſtronger evidence.

The Jews of the preſent age are a farther evidence.

28. That all this is true in reference to the *Jews*, that they did thus own theſe Writings as Divine, appears not only by the records of paſt Ages, but by the *Jews* of the preſent, who ſtill own them, and cannot be ſuſpected of combination with the *Chriſtians*. And if theſe were reaſonable grounds of conviction to the *Jews*, (as he muſt be more abſurdly ſceptical that ſhall deny) they muſt be ſo to *Chriſtians* alſo, who derive them from them: and that with this farther advantage to our Faith, that we ſee the clear completion of thoſe Evangelical prophecies which remain'd dark to them, and conſequently have a farther Argument to confirm us, that the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament are certainly Divine.

The New Teſtament has the like means of probation aſſerted at firſt by Miracle.

29. The New has alſo the like means of probation: which as it is a Collection of the Doctrine taught by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, muſt if truly related, be acknowledged no leſs Divine than what they orally deliver'd. So that they who doubt his being Divine, muſt either deny what Chriſt and his Apoſtles preach'd to be ſo, or elſe diſtruſt the fidelity of the relation: the former ſtrikes at the whole Chriſtian Faith; which if only of men, muſt not only be fallible, but is actually a deceit, whilſt it pretends to be of God, and is not. To ſuch objectors we have to oppoſe thoſe ſtupendous miracles with which the Goſpel was atteſted; ſuch as demonſtrated a more than human efficacy. And that God ſhould lend his Omnipotence to abet the

falſe,

false pretentions of men, is a conceit too unworthy even for the worst of men to entertain.

30. 'Tis true, there have been by God permitted lying miracles, as well as true ones have been done by him; such as were those of the Magicians in *Egypt*, in opposition to the other of *Moses*; but then the difference between both was so conspicuous, that he must be more partial and disingenuous, than even those Magicians were, who would not acknowledge the disparity, and confess in those which were truly supernatural, *the finger of God*, Exod. 8. 19. Therefore both in the Old and New Testament it is predicted, that *false Prophets should arise, and do signs and wonders*, Deut. 13. 1. Matt. 24. 11, 24. as a trial of their fidelity who made profession of Religion; whether they would prefer the few and trivial sleights which recommend a deceiver, before those great and numberless miracles which attested the sacred Oracles deliver'd to the sons of men by the God of truth. Whether the trick of a *Barchochebas*, to hold fire in his mouth; that of *Marcus* the heretick, to make the Wine of the holy Sacrament appear blood; or that of *Mahomet*, to bring a Pigeon to his ear, ought to be put in balance against all the miracles wrought by *Moses*, our Saviour or his Apostles. And in a word; whether the silly stories which *Iamblichus* solemnly relates of *Pythagoras*, or those *Philostratus* tells of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, deserve to rival those of the Evangelists. It is a most just judgment, and accordingly threatned by Almighty God that they who would *not believe the truth should believe a lie*, 2 Thess. 2. 11. But still the Almighty, *where any man* or devil *doth proudly*, *is* evidently *above him*, Exod. 18. 11. *will be justified in his sayings, and be clear when he is judged*, Rom. 3. 4.

Which are above the pretences of impostor.

31. But if men will be Scepticks, and doubt every thing, they are to know that the matter call'd into question, is of a nature that admits but two ways of solution; probability, and testimony. First for probability, let it be consider'd, who were the first Promulgers of Christ's miracles. In his life time they were either the patients on whom his miracles were wrought, or the common people that were spectators: the former, as they could not be deceiv'd themselves, but must needs know whether they were cur'd or no; so what imaginable design could they have to deceive others? Many indeed have pretended impotency as a motive of compassion; but what could they gain by owning a cure they had not? As for the spectators, as their multitude adds to their credibility, (it being morally impossible that so many should at once be deluded in a matter so obvious to their senses) so do's it also acquit them from fraud and combination. Cheats and forgeries are always hatch'd in the dark, in close Cabals, and private Juncto's. That five thousand men at one time, and four thousand at another should conspire to say, that they were miraculously fed, when they were not; and all prove true to the fiction, and not betray it, is a thing as irrational to be suppos'd, as impossible to be parallel'd.

The Witnesses of the first Miracles of Christ and his Apostles were credible.

32. Besides, admit it possible that so many could have joyn'd in the deceit, yet what imaginable end could they have in it? Had their lie been subservient to the designs of some potent Prince that might have rewarded it, there had been some temptation; but what could they expect from the reputed son of a Carpenter, who had not himself where to lay his head? Nay, who disclaim'd all secular power; convey'd himself away from their importunities, when they would have forc'd him to be a King: and consequently, could not be look'd on as one that would head a sedition, or attempt to raise himself to a capacity of rewarding his Abettors. Upon all these considerations there appears not the least shadow of probability, that either those particular persons who publish'd the cures they had receiv'd, or those multitudes who were witnesses and divulgers of those, or his other miracles, could do it upon any sinister design, or indeed upon any other motive, but gratitude and admiration.

Had no end to tempt to forgery.

33. In the next place, if we come to those miracles which succeeded Christ's death, those most important, and convincing of his Resurrection and Ascension and observe who were the divulgers of those, we shall find them very unlikely to be men of design; a set of illiterate men, taken from the Fisher boats, and other mean occupations: and such as needed a miracle as great as any of those they were to assert (the descent of the Holy Ghost) to fit them for their office. What alas could they drive at, or how could they hope that their testimony could be receiv'd, so much against the humor and interest of the present Rulers; unless they were assur'd not only of the truth of the things, but also of some supernatural aids to back and fortify them? Accordingly we find, that till they had receiv'd those; till by the descent of the Holy Ghost they were *endued with power from on high*, Luke 24. 49.

But all secular motives to engage their silence.

 they

they never attempted the discovery of what they had seen: but rather hid themselves, kept all their assemblies in privacy and concealment, *for fear of the Jews*, John 20. 19. and so were far enough from projecting any thing besides their own safety. Afterwards, when they began to preach, they had early essays, what their secular advantages would be by it; threatnings and revilings, scourgings and imprisonments, *Acts* 4. 21. 5. 18, 40. And can it be imagin'd that men who a little before had shew'd themselves so little in love with suffering, that none of them durst stick to their Master at his apprehension, but one forswore, and all forsook him; can it, I say, be imagin'd that these men should be so much in love with their own Fable, as to venture all sorts of persecution for the propagating it? Or if they could, let us in the next place consider what probability there could be of success.

Their preaching oppos'd by the Roman and Jewish rulers.

34. Their preaching amounting to no less than the Deifying of one whom both their Roman and Jewish Rulers; nay, the generality of the people had executed as a malefactor: so that they were all engaged, in defence of their own Act, to sift their testimony with all the rigour that conscious jealousy could suggest. And where were so many concern'd inquisitors, there was very little hope for a forgery to pass. Besides the avow'd displeasure of their Governours made it a hazardous thing to own a belief of what they asserted. Those that adher'd to them could not but know, that at the same time they must espouse their dangers and sufferings. And men use not to incur certain mischiefs, upon doubtful and suspicious grounds.

And all secular interests of their Auditors.

35. Yet farther, their doctrine was design'd to an end to which their Auditors could not but have the greatest reluctancy: they were to struggle with that rooted prepossession which the Jews had for the Mosaical Law, which their Gospel out-dated; and the Gentiles for the Rites and Religion of their Ancestors; and, which was harder than either, with the corruptions and vices of both: to plant humility and internal sanctity, so contrary to that ceremonial holiness, upon which the Jews so valued themselves, and despis'd others: and Temperance, Justice and Purity, so contrary to the practice, nay, even the Religion of the Heathen; and to attempt all this with no other allurement, no other promise of recompence but what they must attend in another world, and pass too through reproaches and inflictions, torments and death. These were all such invincible prejudices as they could never hope to break through with a lie: nay, which they could not have encounter'd even with every common truth, but only with that, which being Divine, brought its aids with it; without which 'twas utterly impossible for all the skill or oratory of men to overcome such disadvantages.

The success of their preaching is a farther evidence in its behalf.

36. And yet with all these did these rude inartificial men contest, and that with signal success: no less than three thousand Proselytes made by Saint *Peter*'s first Sermon; and that in *Jerusalem*, the Scene where all was acted and consequently where 'twas the most impossible to impose a forgery. And at the like miraculous rate they went on, till as the Pharisees themselves complain, they had *filled Jerusalem with their doctrine*, Acts 5. 28. nor did *Judea* set bounds to them, *their sound went out into all Nations*, Rom. 10. 18. and their doctrine spread it self through all the Gentile world.

Which shews that there was more than man in it.

37. And sure so wonderful an event, so contrary to human measures, do's sufficiently evince there was more than man in it. Nothing but the same creative Power that produc'd light out of darkness, could bring forth effects so much above the proportion of the cause. Had these weak instruments acted only by their natural powers, nothing of this had been atchiev'd. Alas could these poor rude men learn all Languages within the space of fifty days, which would take up almost as many years of the most industrious Student, and yet had they not been able to speak them, they could never have divulg'd the Gospel to the several Nations, nor so effectually have convinc'd the by-standers, *Acts* 2. that they acted by a higher impulse. And to convince the world they did so, they repeated their Masters miracles as well as his doctrine; heal'd the sick, cast out devils, rais'd the dead. And where God communicated so much of his power, we may reasonably conclude he did it to promote his own work, not the work of the devil, as it must have been if this whole Scene were a lie.

Notwithstanding all credit of history, some are so impudent to suggest that Religion is a lately devis'd Fable

38. When all this is weigh'd, I presume there will remain little ground to suspect, that the first planters of Christian Faith had any other design than what they avowed, *viz.* the bringing men to holiness here, and salvation hereafter. The suspicion therefore, if any, must rest upon the latter times; and accordingly some are willing to perswade themselves and others, that the whole Scheme of our Religion is but a lately divis'd Fable to keep the world in awe, whereof Princes have made some use, but Clergymen more; and that Christ and his Apostles are only actors whom themselves have conjur'd up upon the stage to pursue their plot.

39. In

But these surmisers should assign the time when this enterprize first began.

39. In answer to this bold, this blasphemous suggestion, I should first desire these surmisers to point out the time when, and the persons who began this design; to tell us exactly whence they date this politick Religion, as they are pleas'd to suppose it. If they cannot, they are manifestly unjust to reject our account of it when they can give none themselves; and fail very much of that rigid demonstration they require from others. That there is such a profession as Christianity in the world, is yet (God be blest) undeniable; (though at the rate it has of late declin'd, God knows how long it will be so:) we say it came by Christ and his Apostles, and that it is attested by an uninterrupted testimony of all the intervening Ages, the suffrage of all Christian Churches from that day to this. And sure they who embraced the Doctrine, are the most competent witnesses from whence they receiv'd it.

Religion, that there might be no place for suspicion is attested by heathen as well as Jewish or Christian Writers.

40. Yet lest they should be all thought parties to the design, and their witness excepted against, it has pleased God to give us collateral assurances, and made both Jewish and Gentile Writers give testimony to the Antiquity of Christianity. *Josephus* do's this, lib. 20. chap. 8. and lib. 18. chap. 4. where, after he has given an account of the crucifixion of Christ exactly agreeing with the Evangelists; he concludes, *And to this day the Christian people, who of him borrow their name, cease not to increase.* I add not the personal Elogium which he gives of our Saviour; because some are so hardy to control it: also I pass what *Philo* mentions of the Religious in *Egypt*, because several Learned men refer it to the *Essens*, a Sect among the Jews, or some other. There is no doubt of what *Tacitus* and other Roman Historians speak of *Christ* the Author of the Christian Doctrine; which it had been impossible for him to have done, if there had then been no such Doctrine, or if *Christ* had not been known as the Founder of it. So afterwards *Pliny* gives the Emperor *Trajan* an account both of the manners, and multitude of the Christians; and makes the innocence of the one, and the greatness of the other, an Argument to slacken the persecution against them. Nay, the very bloody Edicts of the persecuting Emperours, and the scoffs and reproaches of *Celsus*, *Porphyry*, *Lucian*, and other profane opposers of this Doctrine, so undeniably assert its being. By all which it appears that Christianity had in those Ages not only a being, but had also obtain'd mightily in the world, and drawn in vast numbers to its profession: and vast indeed they must needs be, to furnish out that whole Army of Martyrs, of which Profane, as well as Ecclesiastick Writers speak. And if all this be not sufficient to evince that Christianity stole not clancularly into the world, but took its rise from those times and persons it pretends, we must renounce all faith of testimony, and not believe an inch farther than we see.

The Penmen of the New Testament were such who could not be mistaken in what they wrote.

41. I suppose I need say no more to shew that the Gospel and all those portentous miracles which attested it, were no forgeries, or stratagems of men. I come now to that doubt which more immediately concerns the Holy Scripture, *viz.* whether all those transactions be so faithfully related there, that we may believe them to have been dictated by the spirit of God. Now for this, the process need be but short, if we consider who were the penmen of the New Testament; even for the most part the Apostles themselves: *Matthew* and *John* who wrote two of the Gospels were certainly so: and *Mark* as all the Ancients aver, was but the Amanuensis to Saint *Peter*; who dictated that Gospel. Saint *Luke* indeed comes not under this first rank of Apostles; yet is by some affirm'd to be one of the seventy Discipes: however an Apostolical person 'tis certain he was, and it was no wonder for such to be inspired. For in those first Ages of the Church men acted more by immediate inflation of the Spirit than since. And accordingly we find *Stephen*, though but a Deacon, had the power of miracles; and preach'd as divinely as the prime Apostles, *Acts* 7. And the gift of the Holy Ghost was then a usual concomitant of conversion, as appears in the Story of *Cornelius*, Acts 10. 45, 46. Besides, Saint *Luke* was a constant attendant on Saint *Paul* (who derived the Faith, *not from man*, *but by the* immediate *revelation of Jesus Christ*, as himself professes, *Gal.* 1. 12.) and is by some said to have wrote by dictate from him, as *Mark* did from Saint *Peter*. Then as to the Epistles they all bear the names of Apostles, except that to the Hebrews, which yet is upon very good grounds presum'd to be Saint *Paul*'s. Now these were the persons commissionated by Christ to preach the Christian Doctrine, and were signally assisted in the discharge of that office; so that as he tells them, it was *not they, who spake, but the spirit of the Father that spake in them*, Matt. 23. 11. And if they spake by divine inspiration, there can be no question that they wrote so also. Nay, indeed of the two, it seems more necessary they should do the latter. For had they err'd in any thing they orally deliver'd, they might have retracted and cured

the mischief: but these Books being design'd as a standing immutable rule of Faith and Manners to all successions, any error in them would have been irreparable, and have entail'd it self upon posterity: which agreed neither with the truth, nor goodness of God to permit.

That the books were wrote by them whose names are inscrib'd, we are as much assur'd of as 'tis possible to be, and that they are not since corrupted.

42. Now that these Books were indeed writ by them whose names they bear, we have as much assurance as 'tis possible to have of any thing of that nature, and that distance of time from us. For however some of them may have been controverted, yet the greatest have admitted no dispute; whose doctrines agreeing exactly with the others, give testimony to them. And to the bulk of those Writings, it is notorious that the first Christians receiv'd them from the Apostles, and so transmitted them to the ensuing Ages, which receiv'd them with the like esteem and veneration. *They cannot be corrupted,* says Saint *Austin* in the thirty second against *Faustus* the Manich. c. 16. *because they are and have been in the hand of all Christians. And whosoever should first attempt an alteration, he would be confuted by the inspection of ancienter Copies. Besides, the Scriptures are not in some one Language, but translated into many: so that the faults of one Book would be corrected by others more ancient, or in a different Tongue.*

The Christians who laid down their lives for those books would not corrupt them, and others could not.

43. And how much the body of Christians were in earnest concern'd to take care in this matter, appears by very costly evidences; multitudes of them chusing rather to part with their lives than their Bibles. And indeed 'tis a sufficient proof, that their reverence of that Book was very avowed and manifest; when their heathen Persecutors made that one part of their persecution. So that as whereever the Christian Faith was receiv'd, this Book was also, under the notion we now plead for, *viz.* as the writings of men inspir'd by God: so it was also contended for even unto death; and to part with the Bible was to renounce the Faith. And now, after such a cloud of testimonies, we may sure take up that (ill-applied) saying of the High Priest, *Matt.* 26. 65. *What farther need have we of witnesses.*

There are besides external, internal evidences in behalf of the Scripture.

44. Yet besides these, another sort of witnesses there are, I mean those intrinsick evidences which arise out of the Scripture it self; but of these I think not proper here to insist, partly because the subject will be in a great degree coincident with that of the second general consideration; and partly because these can be argumentative to none who are not qualified to discern them. Let those who doubt the Divine Original of Scripture, well digest the former grounds which are within the verge of reason; and when by those they are brought to read it with due reverence, they will not want Arguments from Scripture it self to confirm their veneration of it.

It is farther asserted by the common measures of credibility.

45. In the mean time, to evince how proper the former Discourse is to found a rational belief that the Scripture is the Word of God, I shall compare it with those measures of credibility upon which all human transactions move, and upon which men trust their greatest concerns without diffidence or dispute.

The promulgation of laws, and notices of commerce.

46. That we must in many things trust the report of others, is so necessary, that without it human society cannot subsist. What a multitude of subjects are there in the world, who never saw their Prince, nor were at the making of any Law; if all these should deny their obedience, because they have it only by hear-say, there is such a man, and such Laws, what would become of government? So also for property, if nothing of testimony may be admitted, how shall any man prove his right to any thing? All pleas must be decided by the sword, and we shall fall into that state (which some have fancied the primitive) of universal hostility. In like manner for traffick and commerce; how should any Merchant first attempt a trade to any foreign part of the world, if he did not believe that such a place there was? and how could he believe that, but upon the credit of those who have been there? Nay indeed how could any man first attempt to go but to the next Market Town, if he did not from the report of others conclude that such a one there was? So that if this universal diffidence should prevail, every man should be a kind of *Plantagnus,* fixt to the soil he first sprung up in. The absurdities are indeed so infinite, and so obvious, that I need not dilate upon them.

'Tis not of moment that the promulgation of laws, and relations of trade, are made by our contemporaries

47. But it will perhaps be said, that in things that are told us by our contemporaries, and that relate to our own time, men will be less apt to deceive us, because they know 'tis in our power to examine and discover the truth. To this I might say, that in many instances it would scarce quit cost to do so, and the inconveniences of trial would exceed those of belief. But I shall willingly admit this probable Argument, and only desire it may be applied to our main question, by considering whether the primitive Christians, who receiv'd the Scripture as Divine, had not the

same

ſame ſecurity of not being deceiv'd, who had as great opportunities of examining, and the greateſt concern of doing it throughly, ſince they were to engage not only their future hopes in another world, but (that which to nature is more ſenſible) all their preſent enjoyments and even life it ſelf upon the truth of it.

We allow the ancient hiſtorical accounts of men, actions and books

48 But becauſe it muſt be confeſt that we who are ſo many Ages remov'd from them, have not their means of aſſurance, let us in the next place conſider, whether an aſſent to thoſe teſtimonies they have left behind them, be not warranted by the common practice of mankind in other caſes. Who is there that queſtions there was ſuch a man as *William* the Conquerour in this Iſland? or, to lay the Scene farther, who doubts there was an *Alexander*, a *Julius Cæſar*, an *Auguſtus*? Now what have we to found this confidence on beſides the faith of Hiſtory? And I preſume even thoſe who exact the ſevereſt demonſtrations for Eccleſiaſtick Story, would think him a very impertinent Sceptick that ſhould do the like in theſe. So alſo, as to the Authors of Books; who diſputes whether *Homer* writ the Iliads, or *Virgil* the Æneids, or *Cæſar* the Commentaries, that paſs under their names? yet none of theſe have been atteſted in any degree like the Scripture. 'Tis ſaid indeed, that *Cæſar* ventur'd his own life to ſave his Commentaries, imploying one hand to hold thoſe above the water, when it ſhould have aſſiſted him in ſwimming. But who ever laid down their lives in atteſtation of that, or any human compoſure, as multitudes of men have done for the Bible?

Nor is it of moment to ſay, that in theſe inſtances we give our aſſent becauſe the things are of ſmall concern.

49. But perhaps 'twill be ſaid, that the ſmall concern men have, who wrote theſe, or other the like Books, inclines them to acquieſce in the common opinion. To this I muſt ſay, that many things inconſiderable to mankind have been oft very laboriouſly diſcuſt, as appears by many unedifying Volumes, both of Philoſophers and Schoolmen. But whatever may be ſaid in this inſtance, 'tis manifeſt there are others, wherein mens real and greateſt intereſts are intruſted to the teſtimonies of former Ages. For example, a man poſſeſſes an eſtate which was bought by his great Grand-father, or perhaps elder progenitor: he charily preſerves that deed of purchaſe, and never looks for farther ſecurity of his title: yet alas, at the rate that men object againſt the Bible, what numberleſs Cavils might be rais'd againſt ſuch a deed? How ſhall it be known that there was ſuch a man as either Seller or Purchaſer? If by the Witneſſes, they are as liable to doubt as the other; it being as eaſy to forge the Atteſtation as the main writing: and yet notwithſtanding all theſe poſſible deceits, nothing but a poſitive proof of forgery can invalidate this deed. Let but the Scripture have the ſame meaſure, be allowed to ſtand in force, to be what it pretends to be, till the contrary be (not by ſurmiſes and poſſible conjectures) but by evident proof evinc'd; and its greateſt Advocates will aſk no more.

Our immunities, and thoſe of Magna Charta are not of ſlight moment, and are allow'd to be free from falſification.

50. A like inſtance may be given in puplick concerns: the immunities and rights of any Nation, particularly here of our *Magna Charta*, granted many Ages ſince, and depoſited among the publick Records: to make this ſignify any thing, it muſt be taken for granted, that this was without falſification preſerv'd to our times; yet how eaſy were it to ſuggeſt that in ſo long a ſucceſſion of its keepers, ſome may have been prevail'd on by the influence of Princes to abridge and curtail its conceſſions; others by a prevailing faction of the people to amplify and extend it? Nay, if men were as great Scepticks in Law, as they are in Divinity, they might exact demonſtrations that the whole thing were not a forgery. Yet, for all theſe poſſible ſurmiſes, we ſtill build upon it, and ſhould think he argued very fallaciouſly, that ſhould go to evacuate it, upon the force of ſuch remote ſuppoſitions.

The ſecurity we have of the Scripture, is greater than we can have for our national records.

51. Now I deſire it may be conſider'd whether our ſecurity concerning the Holy Scripture be not as great, nay, greater than it can be of this. For firſt, this is a concern only of a particular Nation, and ſo can expect no forreign atteſtation; and ſecondly, it has all along reſted on the fidelity of its keepers; which has been either a ſingle perſon, or at beſt ſome ſmall number at a time; whereas the Scriptures have been witneſs'd to by perſons of all Nations, and thoſe not ſingle, but collective Bodies and Societies, even as many as there have been Chriſtian Churches throughout the world. And the ſame that are its Atteſtors have been its Guardians alſo, and by their multitudes made it a very difficult, if not an impoſſible thing, to falſify it in any conſiderable degree; it being not imaginable, as I ſhew'd before from Saint *Auſtin*, all Churches ſhould combine to do it: and if they did not, the fraud could not paſs undetected: and if no eminent change could happen, much leſs could any new, any counterfeit Goſpel be obtruded, after innumerable Copies of the firſt had been tranſlated into almoſt all Languages, and diſperſt throughout the world.

52. The

Of the Imperial law. 52. The Imperial Law compil'd by *Justinian*, was soon after his death, by reason of the inroads of the *Goths*, and other barbarous Nations, utterly lost in the Western world; and scarce once heard of for the space of five hundred years, and then came casually to be retriv'd upon the taking of *Amalfis* by the *Pisans*, one single Copy being found there at the plundering of the City. And the whole credit of those Pandects, which have ever since govern'd the Western world, depends in a manner on that single Book, formerly call'd the *Pisan*; and now, after that *Pisa* was taken by the *Florentines*, the *Florentine* Copy. But notwithstanding this, the body of the Civil Law obtains; and no man thinks it reasonable to question its being really what it pretends to be, notwithstanding its single, and so long interrupted derivation. I might draw this parallel through many other instances, but these may suffice to shew, that if the Scripture might find but so much equity, as to be try'd by the common measures of other things, it would very well pass the test.

Men, when they are resolv'd to disobey the precepts of Scripture, think it their concern to disavow its authority. 53. But men seem in this case (like our late Legislators) to set up new extraregular Courts of Justice, to try those whom no ordinary rules will cast, yet their designs require should be condemn'd: and we may conclude, 'tis not the force of reason, but of prejudice, that makes them so unequal to themselves, as to reject the Scripture when they receive every thing else upon far weaker grounds. The bottom of it is, they are resolv'd not to obey its precepts; and therefore think it the shortest cut to disavow its authority: for should they once own that, they would find themselves intangl'd in the most inextricable dilemma; that of the *Pharisees* about *John Baptist*; *If we say from heaven, he will say, Why then did you not believe him?* Matt. 21. 25. If they confess the Scriptures Divine, they must be self-condemn'd in not obeying them. And truly men that have such preingagements to their lusts, that they must admit nothing that will disturb them, do but prevaricate, when they call for greater evidence and demonstrations: for those bosom Sophisters will elude the most manifest conviction, and like Juglers, make men disbelieve even their own senses. So that any other ways of evidence will be as disputable with them, as those already offer'd: which is the third thing propos'd to consider.

No possible way of revelation would gain better credit, than those afforded already. 54. It has been sometimes seen in popular mutinies, that when blanks have been sent them, they could not agree what to ask: and were it imaginable that God should so far court the infidelity of men, as to allow them to make their own demands, to set down what ways of proof would perswade them; I doubt not there are many have obstinacy enough to defeat their own methods, as well as they do now God's. 'Tis sure here is no ordinary way of conviction left for them to ask, God having already (as has also been shew'd) afforded that. They must therefore resort to immediate revelation, expect instant assurances from heaven, that this Book we call the Bible is the Word of God.

Not Dreams. 55. My first question then is, in what manner this revelation must be made to appear credible to them. The best account we have of the several ways of revelation is from the *Jews*, to whom God was pleas'd upon new emergences signally to reveal himself. These were first Dreams; secondly, Visions; by both which the prophets receiv'd their inspirations. Thirdly, *Urim* and *Thummim*. Fourthly, the *Bath-col* (as they term it) Thunder and Voice from Heaven. Let us consider them distinctly, and see whether our Sceptical men may not probably find somewhat to dispute in every one of these. And first for Dreams, it is among us so hard to distinguish between those that arise from constitution, prepossession of fancy, Diabolical, or Divine infusion, that those that have the most critically consider'd them, do rather difference them by their matter, than any certain discriminating circumstances: and unless we had some infallible way of discerning, our dependance on them may more probably betray than direct us. 'Tis unquestionable that usually fancy has the greatest stroke in them. And if he that should commit himself to the guidance of his waking fancy, is not like to be over-wisely govern'd, what can we expect from his sleeping? All this and more may doubtless be soberly enough objected against the validity of our common dreams.

Though clearly supernatural. 56. But admit there were now such Divine Dreams as brought their evidence along with them, yet sure 'tis possible for prejudic'd men to resist even the clearest convictions. For do we not see some that have made a shift to extinguish that natural light, those notions which are interwoven into the very frame and constitution of their minds, that so they may sin more at ease, and without reluctancy? and sure 'tis as possible for them to close their eyes against all rays from without too, to resist revelation as well as instinct; and more likely, by how much a transient cause is naturally less operative than a permanent. An instance of this we have in

Balaam,

Balaam, who being in these nightly visitations prohibited by God to go to *Balak*, and though he knew then what he afterwards says, *Numb.* 23. 19. that *God was not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent*; yet he would not take God at his first word, but upon a fresh bait to his covetousness, tries again for an answer more indulgent to his interest. Besides, if God should thus reveal himself to some particular persons, yet 'tis beyond all president or imagination that he should do it to every man; and then how shall those who have these dreams, be able to convince others that they are Divine?

57. 'Tis easy to guess what reception a man that produces no other authority, would have in this ludicrous Age: he would certainly be thought rather to want sleep, than to have had revelations in it. And if *Jacob* and the Patriarchs, who were themselves acquainted with Divine dreams, yet did not believe *Joseph's*; any man that should now pretend in that kind, would be sure to fall under the same irony that he did, to be entertain'd with a *behold this dreamer cometh*, Gen. 37. 19.

They would be so far from obtaining belief, that probably they would be matter of sport.

58. The second way of revelation by vision was, where the man was wrap'd into an extasy, his spirit for a while suspended from all sensible communication with the body, and entertain'd with supernatural light. In these the Prophets saw emblematical representations of future events, receiv'd knowledge of divine Mysteries, and commission and ability to discharge the whole Prophetick office. Now suppose God should now raise us Prophets, and inspire them after this manner; what would the merry men of this time say to it? Can we think that they who rally upon all that the former Prophets have writ, would look with much reverence on what the new ones should say? Some perhaps would construe their raptures to be but like *Mahomet's* Epilepsy; others a fit of frensy, others perhaps a being *Drunk with new wine*, Acts 2. 13. but those that did the most soberly consider it, would still need a new revelation to attest the truth of this: there being far more convincing arguments to prove the Scriptures Divine, than any man can alledge to prove his inspiration to be so. And 'tis sure a very irrational method to attempt the clearing of a doubt by somewhat which is it self more doubtful.

Not Visions, or Extasies.

59. A third way was by *Urim* and *Thummim*, which Writers tell us was an Oracle resulting from the Letters which were engraven in the High Priest's Pectoral, to which in all important doubts the *Jews* of those Ages resorted, and receiv'd responses; but whether it were by the suddain prominency, or resplendency of the letters, or by any other way, is not material in this place to enquire: one thing is certain, that the Ephod, and consequently the Pectoral was in the Priest's Custody, and that he had the administration of the whole affair. Now I refer it to consideration, whether this one circumstance would not (to those prejudic'd men I speak of) utterly evacuate the credit of the Oracle. They have taught themselves to look on Priesthood, whether Legal or Evangelical, only as a better name for imposture and cosenage: and they that can accuse the Priests for having kept up a cheat for so many Ages, must needs think them such omnipotent Juglers, that nothing can be fence against their Legerdemain: and by consequence, this way of revelation would rather foment their displeasure at the Ecclesiasticks, than satisfy their doubts of the Scripture.

Not Oracles.

60. Lastly for the fourth way, that of Thunder and Voice from Heaven, though that would be a signal way of conviction to unprejudiced men, yet it would probably have as little effect as the rest upon others: men that pretend to such deep reasonings, would think it childish to be frighted out of their opinion by a clap of Thunder; some Philosophical reason shall be found out, to satisfy them that 'tis the effect only of some natural cause, and any the most improbable shall serve turn to supplant the fear of its being a Divine testimony to that which they are so unwilling should be true. As for the voice from Heaven, it must either be heard by others, and related to them; or else immediately by themselves: if the former, 'twill lie under the same prejudice which the Bible already do's, that they have it but by hear-say: and reporters would fall under the reproach either of design or frenzy; that they meant to deceive, or were themselves deceiv'd by their own distemper'd fancy. But if themselves should be Auditors of it, 'tis odds but their bottomless jealousies in Divine Matters would suggest a possibility of fraud, though they knew not how to trace it: nay 'tis more than possible that they will rather disbelieve their own senses, than in this instance take their testimony with all its consequences.

Not a voice from heaven.

61. Nor is this a wild supposition: for we see it possible for not only single men, but multitudes to disbelieve their senses through an excess of credulity: witness the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Why may it not then be as possible for others to do

Prejudice prevails with men to disbelieve their senses.

do the like through a greater exceſs of incredulity? Beſides mens prepoſſeſſions and affections have a ſtrange influence on their Faith: men many times will not ſuffer themſelves to believe the moſt credible things, if they croſs their inclination. How often do we ſee irregular patients that will not believe any thing that their appetite craves, will do them hurt, though their Phyſicians, nay their own even ſenſitive experience atteſt it to them? And can we think that a diſeas'd mind, gaſping with an Hydropick thirſt after the pleaſures of ſin, will ever aſſent to thoſe premiſes, whoſe concluſion will engage to the renouncing them? Will not a luxurious voluptuous perſon be willing rather to give his ears the lie, to disbelieve what he hears, than permit them more deeply to diſoblige his other ſenſes, by bringing in thoſe reſtraints and mortifications which the Scripture would impoſe upon them?

Not one riſing from the dead. 62. Thus we ſee how little probability there is, that any of theſe ways of revelation would convince theſe incredulous men. And indeed thoſe that will not believe upon ſuch inducements as may ſatisfy men of ſober reaſon, will hardly ſubmit to any other method, according to that Aſſertion of Father *Abraham, If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded, though one roſe from the dead,* Luke 16. 31. Now at this rate of infidelity, what way will they leave God to manifeſt any thing convincingly to the world? which is to put him under an impotency greater than adheres to humanity: for we men have power to communicate our minds to others, tell whether we own ſuch or ſuch a thing to which we are intitled; and we can ſatisfy our Auditors that it is indeed we that ſpeak to them: but if every method God uſes, do's rather increaſe than ſatisfy mens doubts, all intercourſe between God and man is intercepted; and he muſt do that of neceſſity, which *Epicurus* fancied he did of his choice; *viz.* keep himſelf unconcern'd in the affairs of mortals, as having no way of communicating with them. Nay (what is yet, if poſſible, more abſurd) he muſt be ſuppos'd to have put the works of his Creation out of his own reach, to have given men diſcourſive faculties, and left himſelf no way of addreſs to them.

The Scepticks reaſonings import that God not only has not, but cannot reveal his will to men: and has left him in a worſe ſtate than brute beaſts, who have inſtinct to guide them. 63. Theſe inferences how horridly ſoever they ſound, yet I ſee not how they can be diſclaim'd by thoſe, who are unſatisfied with all thoſe ways by which God hath hitherto reveal'd himſelf to the world. For can it be imagin'd, that God who created man a reaſonable creature, that himſelf might be glorified in his free and rational obedience; (when all other creatures obey upon impulſe and inſtinct) can it, I ſay, be imagin'd, that he ſhould ſo remiſly purſue his own deſign, as to let ſo many Ages paſs ſince the Creation, and never to acquaint mankind with the particulars wherein that obedience was to be exercis'd. This ſure were ſo diſagreeable to his wiſdom and goodneſs, that it cannot be charg'd upon his will: and conſequently they who own not that he has made any ſuch revelation, muſt tacitly tax him of impotence, that he could not do it. But if any man ſay he has, and yet reject all this which both Jews and Chriſtians receive as ſuch, let him produce his teſtimonies for the others, or rather (to retort his own meaſure) his demonſtrations. And then let it appear whether his Scheme of Doctrine, or ours, will need the greater aid of that eaſy credulity he reproaches us with.

Exceptions taken againſt the ſtile of Holy Scripture. 64. I have now gone through the method I propoſed for evincing the Divine Original of the Scriptures, and ſhall not deſcend to examine thoſe more minute and particular Cavils which profane men make againſt them; the proof of this virtually ſuperſeding all thoſe. For if it be reaſonable to believe it the Word of God, it muſt be reaſonable alſo to believe it of perfection proportionable to the Author; and then certainly it muſt be advanc'd beyond all our objection. For to thoſe who except to the ſtile, the incoherence, the contradictions, or whatever elſe in Scripture; I ſhall only ask this one queſtion, whether it be not much more poſſible that they (who can pretend to be nothing above fallible men) may miſjudge, than that the infallible God ſhould dictate any thing juſtly liable to thoſe charges: I am ſure they muſt depart as much from Reaſon as Religion, to affirm the contrary. But alas, inſtead of this implicit ſubmiſſion to God's Word, men take up explicit prejudices againſt it; condemn it without ever examining the truth of the allegation. 'Tis certain that in a Writing of ſuch Antiquity, whoſe original Language has Idioms and Phraſes ſo peculiar, whoſe Country had Cuſtoms ſo differing from the reſt of the world; 'tis impoſſible to judge of it without reference to all thoſe circumſtances. Add to this, that the Hebrew has been a dead Language for well nigh two thouſand years, no where in common uſe: nor is there any other ancient Book now extant in it, beſides thoſe (yet not all neither) of the Old Teſtament.

65. Now

65. Now of those many who defame Holy Writ, how few are there that have the industry to enquire into those particulars? And when for want of knowledge, some passages seem improper, or perhaps contradictory; the Scripture must bear the blame of their ignorance, and be accus'd as absurd and unintelligible, because themselves are stupid and negligent. It were therefore methinks but a reasonable proposal, that no man should arraign it, till they have used all honest diligence, taken in all probable helps for the understanding it: and if this might be obtain'd, I believe most of its Accusers would like those of the woman in the Gospel, *John* 8. 9. drop away, as conscious of their own incompetency; the loudest out-cries that are made against it, being commonly of those who fall upon it only as a fashionable theam of discourse, and hope to acquire themselves the reputation of wits by thus charging God foolishly. But he that would candidly and uprightly endeavour to comprehend before he judges, and to that end industriously use those means which the Providence of God by the labours of pious men hath afforded him, will certainly find cause to acquit the Scripture of those imputations which our bold Criticks have cast upon it. I do not say that he shall have all the obscurities of it perfectly clear'd to him; but he shall have so many of them as is for his real advantage, and shall discern such reasons why the rest remain unfathomable, as may make him not only justify, but celebrate the wisdom of the Author.

Concerning which the censurers are generally most incompetent.

66. Yet this is to be expected only upon the foremention'd condition, *viz*. that he comes with sincere and honest intentions; for as for him that comes to the Scripture with design, and wishes to find matter of cavil and accusations; there is little doubt but that spirit of impiety and profaness which sent him thither, will meet him there as a spirit of delusion, and occecation. That Prince of the Air will cast such mists, raise such black vapours; that as the Apostle speaks, *The light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shall not shine unto him*, 2 Cor. 4. 4. Indeed were such a man left only to the natural efficacy of prejudice, that is of it self so blinding, so infatuating a thing, as commonly fortifies against all conviction. We see it in all the common instances of life: mens very senses are often enslav'd by it: the prepossession of a strong fancy, will make the objects of sight or hearing appear quite different from what they are. But in the present case, when this shall be added to Satanical illusions, and both left to their operations by God's withdrawing his illuminating grace, the case of such a man answers the description of Scripture, *They have eyes and see not, ears have they and hear not*, Rom. 11. 8. And that God will so withdraw his grace, we have all reason to believe; he having promis'd it only to the meek, to those who come with malleable ductile spirits, to learn, not to deride or cavil. Saint *Peter* tells us, that the *unlearned and unstable wrest the Scripture to their own destruction*, 2 Pet. 3. 15. And if God permit such to do so, much more will he the proud and malicious.

But no writing can escape cavil and prejudice: and 'tis a judgement that they should not understand who shut their eyes.

67. I say not this, to deter any from the study of Holy Scripture, but only to caution them to bring a due preparation of mind along with them; God's Word being like a generous soveraign medicament, which if simply and regularly taken, is of the greatest benefit; but if mixt with poison, serves only to make that more fatally operative. To conclude, he that would have his doubts solv'd concerning Scripture, let him follow the method our blessed Lord has describ'd: Let him *do the will of God, and then he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God*, John 7. 17. Let him bring with him a probity of mind, a willingness to assent to all convictions he shall there meet with; and then he will find grounds sufficient to assure him that it is God's Word, and consequently to be receiv'd with all the submission and reverence, that its being so exacts.

He that do's the will of God, shall know of the doctrine.

SECT. II.

The Subject Matter treated of in the Holy Scripture, is excellent, as is also its end and design.

WE have hitherto consider'd the Holy Scripture only under one notion, as it is the Word of God; we come now to view it in the Subject Matter of it, the several parts whereof it consists; which are so various and comprehensive, as shews the whole is deriv'd from *him who is all in all*, 1 Cor. 15. 28. But that we may not speak only loosely, and at rovers,

The Subject Matter of Scripture considered.

vers, we will take this excellent Frame in pieces, and consider its most eminent parts distinctly. Now the parts of Holy Writ seem to branch themselves into these severals: First, the Historical; secondly, the Prophetick; thirdly, the Doctrinal; fourthly, the Preceptive; fifthly, the Minatory; sixthly, the Promissory. These are the several veins in this rich Mine, in which he who industriously labours, will find the Psalmist was not out in his estimate, when he pronounces them *more to be desir'd than gold, yea, than fine gold*, Psal. 19. 10.

First the Historical part.

2. To speak first of the Historical part, the things which chiefly recommend a History, are the dignity of the subject, the truth of the relation and those pleasant or profitable observations which are interwoven with it. And first, for the dignity of the subject, the History of the Bible must be acknowledg'd to excel all others: those shew the rise and progress of some one People or Empire; this shews us the original of the whole Universe; and particularly of Man, for whose use and benefit the whole Creation was design'd. By this mankind is brought into acquaintance with it self; made to know the elements of its constitution, and taught to put a differing value upon that Spirit which was *breath'd into it by God*, Gen. 2. 7. and the flesh, whose *foundation is in the dust*, Job 4. 19. And when this Historical part of Scripture contracts and draws into a narrow channel, when it records the concerns but of one Nation, yet it was that which God had dignified above all the rest of the world, mark'd it out for his own peculiar; made it the repository of his truth, and the visible stock from whence the Messias should come, in whom *all the Nations of the earth were to be blessed*, Gen. 18. 18. so that in this one people of the Jews, was virtually infolded the highest and most important interests of the whole world; and it must be acknowledg'd, no story could have a nobler subject to treat of.

The relations are remarkably impartial, the historians recording their own faults.

3. Secondly, as to the truth of the relation, though to those who own it Gods Word there needs no other proof; yet it wants not human Arguments to confirm it. The most undoubted symptom of sincerity in an Historian is impartiality. Now this is very eminent in Scripture Writers: they do not record others faults, and baulk their own; but indifferently accuse themselves as well as others. *Moses* mentions his own diffidence and unwillingness to go on Gods message, *Exod.* 4. 13. his provocation of God at the waters of *Meribah*, Numb. 20. *Jonah* records his own sullen behaviour towards God, with as great aggravations as any of his enemies could have done. *Peter* in his dictating Saint *Mark*'s Gospel, neither omits nor extenuates his sin; all he seems to speak short in, is his repentence. Saint *Paul* registers himself as the greatest of sinners.

And their nearest relations.

4. And as they were not indulgent to their own personal faults, so neither did any nearness of relation, any respect of quality bribe them to a concealment: *Moses* relates the offence of his sister *Miriam* in mutinying, *Numb.* 12. 1. of his brother *Aaron* in the matter of the Calf, *Exod.* 32. 4. with as little disguise as that of *Korah* and his company. *David*, though a King, hath his adultery and murder display'd in the blackest characters: and King *Hezekiah*'s little vanity of shewing his treasures, do's not escape a remark. Nay, even the reputation of their Nation could not biass the sacred Writers; but they freely tax their crimes: the Israelites murmurings in the wilderness, their Idolatries in *Canaan*, are set down without any palliation or excuse. And they are as frequently branded for their stubbornness and ingratitude, as the Canaanites are for their abominations. So that certainly no History in the world do's better attest its truth by this evidence of impartiality.

The narrations are rare and surprizing.

5. In the last place, it commends it self both by the pleasure and profit it yields. The rarity of those events its records, surprizes the mind with a delightful admiration; and that mixture of sage Discourses, and well-couch'd Parables wherewith it abounds, do's at once please and instruct. How ingeniously apt was *Nathan*'s Apologue to *David*, whereby with holy artifice he ensnar'd him into repentance? And it remains still matter of instruction to us, to shew us with what unequal scales we are apt to weigh the same crime in others and our selves So also that long train of smart calamities which succeeded his sin, is set out with such particularity, that it seems to be exactly the crime reverst. His own lust with *Bathsheba*, was answer'd with *Amnon*'s towards *Thamar*; his murder of *Uriah* with that of *Amnon*, his treacherous contrivance of that murder, with *Absolom*'s traiterous conspiracy against him. So that every circumstance of his punishment, was the very eccho and reverberation of his guilt. A multitude of the like instances might be produc'd out of Holy Writ; all concurring to admonish us, that God exactly marks, and will repay our crimes; and that commonly with such propriety, that we need no other clue to guide us to the cause of our sufferings, than the very sufferings themselves. Indeed innumerable

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are the profitable observations arising from the historical part of Scripture that flow so easily and unconstrain'd, that nothing but a stupid inadvertence in the Reader can make him baulk them: therefore 'twould be impertinent here to multiply instances.

Secondly, the prophetick part.

6. Let us next consider the prophetick part of Scripture; and we shall find it no less excellent in its kind. The prophetick Books are for the most part made up (as the Prophetick office was) of two parts; Prediction and Instruction. When God rais'd up Prophets, 'twas not only to acquaint men with future events, but to reform their present manners: therefore as they are called Seers in one respect, so they are Watch-men and Shepherds in another. Nay, indeed the former was often subservient to the other as to the nobler end; their gift of fore-telling was to gain them authority, to be as it were the seal of their commission; to convince men that they were sent from God: and so to render them the more pliant to their reproofs and admonitions. And the very matter of their prophesies was usually adapted to this end: the denouncing of judgments being the most frequent Theam, and that design'd to bring men to repentance; as appears experimentally in the case of *Nineveh*. And this latter part of their office, the Prophets acted with the greatest incitation and vehemence.

The liberty and freedom of rebukes.

7. With what liberty and zeal do's *Elijah* arraign *Ahab* of *Naboth*'s murder, and fore-tel the fatal event of it, without any fear of his power, or reverence of his greatness? And *Samuel*, when he delivers *Saul* the fatal message of his rejection, do's passionately and convincingly expostulate with him concerning his sin, 1 *Sam.* 15. 17. Now the very same Spirit still breaths in all the prophetick Writings: the same truth of prediction, and the same zeal against vice.

The truth of predictions.

8. First for the Predictions, what signal completions do we find? How exactly are all the denunciations of judgments fulfill'd, where repentance has not interven'd? He that reads the 28. chap. of *Deut.* and compares it with the Jews calamities, both under the Assyrians and Babylonians, and especially under the Romans, would think their oppressors had consulted it, and transcrib'd their severities thence. And even these Nations, who were the instruments of accomplishing those dismal presages, had their own ruins fore-told, and as punctually executed. And as in Kingdoms and Nations, so to private persons none of the prophetick threatnings ever return'd empty. The sentence pronounc'd against *Ahab*, *Jezebel*, and their posterity, was fulfill'd even to the most minute circumstances of place and manner, as is evident by comparing the denunciation of *Elijah*, 1 *Kings* 21. 19, 23. with their tragical ends recorded in the following chapters. And as for *Jehu*, whose service God was pleas'd to use in that execution, though he rewarded it with entailing the Crown of *Israel* on him for four descents; yet he fore-told those should be the limits, and according we find *Zachariah*, the fourth descendant of his line, was the last of it that sate on that Throne, 2 *Kings* 15. 10. So also the destruction of *Achitophel* and *Judas*, the one immediate, the other many hundred years remote, are fore-told by *David*, Psal. 109. and we find exactly answered in the event.

Especially the promissory.

9. Nor was this exactness confin'd only to the severe predictions, but as eminent in the more gracious. All the blessings which God by himself, or the Ministry of his Prophets promis'd, were still infallibly made good. At the time of life God return'd and visited *Sarah* with conception, notwithstanding those natural improbabilites which made her not only distrust, but even deride and laugh at the promise, *Gen.* 18. The posterity of that Son of Promise, the whole race of *Abraham* was delivered from the Egyptian bondage, and possest of *Canaan*, at the precise time which God had long before signified to *Abraham*, Gen. 15. So likewise the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, was fore-told many years before their deportation, and *Cyrus* named for their restorer, before he had either name or being save only in God's prescience, *Isai.* 44. 28. But I need not multiply instances of national and personal promises. The earliest and comprehensive promise of all was that of the Messiah, in whom all persons and *Nations of the World were to be blest*, Gen. 22. 11. *that seed of the Woman that should bruise the Serpents head*, Gen. 3. 15. *To him give all the Prophets witness*, as Saint *Peter* observes, *Acts* 10. And he who was the subject, made himself also the expounder of those Prophecies in his walk to *Emmaus* with the two Disciples, *Luke* 24. 27. *beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded to them all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.*

And above all the promise of the Messiah.

10. This as it was infinitely the greatest blessing afforded mankind, so was it the most frequently and eminently predicted; and that with the most exact particularities as to all circumstances. His immaculate conception, the union of his two natures

implied in his name *Immanuel*; *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel*; is most plainly fore-told by *Isaiah*, chap. 7. 14. Nay, the very place of his birth so punctually fore-told, that the Priests and Scribes could readily resolve *Herod's* question upon the strength of the Prophecy, and assure him Christ must be *born in Bethlehem*, Matt. 2. 5. As for the whole business and design of his life, we find it so describ'd by *Isaiah*, chap. 61. as Christ himself owns it, *Luke* 4. 18. *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

And propitiation by his death.

11. If we look farther to his death, the greatest part of the Old Testament has a direct aspect on it. All the Levitical œconomy of Sacrifices and Ablutions were but prophetick Rites, and ocular Predictions of that one expiatory Oblation. Nay, most of God's providential dispensations to the Jews, carried in them types and prefigurations of this. Their rescue from *Egypt*, the sprinkling blood to secure them from the destroying Angel; the Manna with which they were fed; the Rock which supplied them with water: these and many more referr'd to Christ, as their final and highest signification.

Prefigur'd in sacrifices, and fore-told by all the Prophets.

12. But besides these darker adumbrations, we have (as the Apostle speaks) *a more sure word of prophecy*. Saint *Peter* in his calculation begins with *Moses*, takes in *Samuel*, and the whole succession of Prophets after him, as bearing witness to this great event of Christ's passion, *Acts* 4. 22. 24. And indeed he that reads the Prophets consideringly, shall find it so punctually describ'd, that the Evangelists do not much more fully instruct him in the circumstances of it. *Daniel* tells us his death, as to the kind of it, was to be violent: *The Messiah shall be cut off*; and as to the design of it, 'twas *not for himself*, Dan. 9. 26. But the Prophet *Isaiah* gives us more than a bare negative account of it; and expresly says, *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was on him, and by his stripes we are healed*, chap. 53. 3. And again, ver. 10. *Thou shalt make his Soul an offering for sin*; and verse 11. *my righteous Servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.* Nor is *Job* an Idumean, much short of even this Evangelical Prophet, in that short Creed of his, wherein he owns him as his Redeemer, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c.* Job 19. 25.

The smallest circumstances of the passion were not omitted

13. And as the end, so the circumstances of his sufferings are most of them under prediction: His extension upon the Cross is mention'd by the Psalmist: *They pierced my hands, and my feet; I may tell all my bones*, Psal. 22. 16. 17. As for his inward dolours, they are in that Psalm so pathetically describ'd, that Christ chose that very form to breath them out in: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* ver. 1. So his revilers did also transcribe part of their reproaches from verse 9. *He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him*, Matt. 27. 43. That vinegar which was offered him on the Cross, was a completion of a prophecy; *In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink*, Psal. 69. 21. the piercing of his side was expresly fore-told by *Zachary*; *they shall look on him whom they have pierced*, Zach. 10. 12. The company in which he suffered and the interment he had, are also intimated by *Isaiah*, *He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.* Isai. 53. 9. Nay even the disposal of his garments was not without a prophecy; *they parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots*, Psal. 22. 18. Here are a cloud of witnesses which as they serve eminently to attest the truth of Christian Religion; so do they to evince the excellency of sacred Scripture, as to the verity of the Prophetick part.

The prophetick writings are most remarkable in their admonitory part.

14. As to the Admonitory part of the Prophetick Writings, they are in their kind no way inferiour to the other. The reproofs are authoritative and convincing. What piercing exprobrations do we find of *Israel's* ingratitude? How often are they upbraided with the better example of the bruit creatures? with the Ox and the Ass by *Isaiah*, chap. 1. 3. with the Stork, and the Crane, and the Swallow, by *Jeremiah*, chap. 8. 7. Nay the constancy of the Heathen to their false gods is instanc'd to reproach their revolt from the true. *Hath a Nation changed their gods which yet are no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit*, Jer. 2. 11. What awful, what majestick representations do we find of God's power, to awake their dread! *Fear ye not me, saith the Lord? will ye not tremble at my presence; who have placed the sands for the bounds of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass over; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it*, Jer. 22. And again, *Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place*, Isai. 57. 15. So

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we find him describ'd as *a God glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders*, Exod. 15. 11. These and many other the like flights of Divine eloquence we meet with in the Prophetick Writings: which cannot but strike us with an awful reverence of the Divine Power.

And the pathetick inducements to repentance.

15. Nor are they less pathetick in the gentler strains. What instance is there of the greatest tenderness and love, which God has not adopted to express his by? He personates all the nearest and most endearing relations: that of a Husband; *I will marry thee to my self*, Hos. 2. 19. of a Father; *I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first born*: nay, he vies bowels with the tender sex, and makes it more possible for a mother to renounce her *compassion towards the son of her womb*, than for him to withdraw his, *Isai.* 49. 15. By all these endearments, these *cords of a man, these bands of love*, as himself stiles them, *Hos.* 11. 4. endeavouring to draw his people to their duty and their happiness. And when their perverseness frustrates all this holy Artifice, how passionately do's he expostulate with them? How solemnly protest his aversness to their ruin? *Why will ye die, O house of Israel? for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God*, Ezek. 18. 31, 32. with what regrets and relenting do's he think of abandoning them? *How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? my heart is turn'd within me, my repentings are kindled together*, Hos. 11. 8. In short, 'twere endless to cite the places in these Prophetick Books, wherein God do's thus condescend to solicit even the sensitive part of man; and that with such moving Rhetorick, that I cannot but wonder at the exception some of our late Criticks make against the Bible, for its defect in that particular: for Oratory is nothing but a dextrous application to the affections and passions of men. And certainly we find not that done with greater advantage any where than in sacred Writ.

Which yet is back'd with reason, and uncontrolable argument.

16. Yet it was not the design of the Prophets (no more than of the Apostle) to take men with guile, 2 *Cor.* 12. 16. to inveigle their affections unawares to their understandings: but they address as well to their reasons, make solemn appeals to their judicative faculties. And *Now judge, I pray between me and my vineyard*, says *Isai.* 5. 3. Nay, God by the Prophet *Ezekiel* solemnly pleads his own cause before them, vindicates the equity of his proceedings from the aspersions they had cast on them; and by most irrefragable Arguments refutes that injurious proverb which went currant among them; and in the close appeals to themselves, *O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?* Ezek. 18. The evidences were so clear that he remits the matter to their own determination. And generally we shall find among all the Topicks of disswasion from sin, there is none more closely prest, than that of the folly of it. Idolatry was a sin to which *Israel* had a great propension, and against which most of the Prophets admonitions were directed. And certainly it can never be more expos'd, and the sottish unreasonableness of it better display'd, than we find in the 44. chap. of *Isaiah*. In like manner we may read the Prophet *Jeremy* disswading from the same sin by Arguments of the most irrefragable conviction, *Jer.* 10.

Their concern was for solid Vertue, and true piety.

17. And as the Prophets omitted nothing as to the manner of their address, to render their exhortations effectual, the matter of them was likewise so considerable as to command attention; It was commonly either the recalling them from their revolts and Apostacies from God by Idolatry, or else to convince them of the insignificancy of all those legal ceremonial performances they so much confided in, when taken up as a *supersedeas* to moral duties. Upon this account it is, that they often depreciate, and in a manner prohibit the solemnest of their worships. *To what purpose are the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with: it is iniquity even your solemn meeting, &c.* Isaiah. 1. 11, 13. Not that these things were in themselves reprovable; for they were all commanded by God; but because the *Jews* depended so much on these external observances, that they thought by them to commute for the *weightier matters of the law* (as our Saviour after stiles them) *judgment, mercy and faith*, Matt. 23. 23. look'd on these rites which discriminated them from other Nations, dispensations from the universal obligations of nature and common Justice.

Not satisfied with little formalities and outward service.

8. This deceit of theirs is sharply upbraided to them by the Prophet *Jeremy*; where he calls their boasts of the *Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, lying words*, and on the contrary, lays the whole stress of their obedience, and expectation of their happiness on the justice and innocence of their conversation, chap. 7. 4. And after do's smartly reproach their insolence in boldly resorting to that

house, which by bringing their sins along with them, they made but an Asylum and Sanctuary for those crimes. *Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsly, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?* Jer. 7. 9, 10, 11. Indeed all the Prophets seem to conspire in this one design, of making them look through shadows and ceremonies, to that inward Purity, Justice and Honesty, which they were design'd to inculcate, not to supplant. And this design as it is in it self most excellent, most worthy the commandment of God and the nature of man; so we have seen that it has been pursued by all the most apt and most powerful mediums, that the thing or persons addrest to were capable of; and so that the Prophets are no less eminent for the discharge of this exhortatory part of their office, than they were in the former, of the predicting.

Thirdly, the Doctrinal part.

19. The next part of Scripture we are to consider, is the Doctrinal; by which I shall not in this place understand the whole complex of Faith and manners together; but restrain it only to those Revelations which are the object of our Belief: and these are so sublime, as shews flesh and blood never reveal'd them. Those great mysteries of our Faith, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Hypostatical union, the Redemption of the World by making the offended party the sacrifice for the offence; are things of so high and abstruse speculation, as no finite understanding can fully fathom. I know their being so, is by some made an Argument for disbelief; but doubtless, very unjustly: for (not to insist upon the different natures of Faith and Science, by which that becomes a proper object of the one which is not of the other) our non-comprehension is rather an indication that they have a higher rise; and renders it infinitely improbable that they could spring from mens invention. For 'twere to suppose too great a disproportion between human faculties to think men could invent what themselves could not understand. Indeed these things lie so much out of the road of human imagination, that I dare appeal to the breasts of the most preverse gain-sayers, whether ever they could have fallen into their thoughts without suggestion from without. And therefore 'tis a miraculous contradiction to reject these truths because of their dissonancy from human reason, and yet at the same time to ascribe their original to man. But certainly there can be nothing more inconsistent with meer natural reason, than to think God can be or do no more than man can comprehend. Never any Nation or Person that own'd a Deity, did ever attempt so to circumscribe him: and it is proportionable only to the licentious profaness of these latter days, thus to measure immensity and omnipotence by our narrow scantling.

Which acquaints us with the Majesty of God.

20. The more genuine and proper effect of these supernatural truths is, to raise our admiration of that divine Wisdom, *whose ways are* so *past finding out*; and to give us a just sense of that infinite distance which is between it, and the highest of that Reason wherein we so pride our selves. And the great propriety these Doctrines have to that end, may well be reckon'd as one part of their excellency.

And obliges to vertue.

21. Indeed there is no part of our holy Faith, but is naturally productive of some peculiar vertue; as the whole Scheme together engages us to be universally *holy in all manner of conversation*, 1 Pet. 1. 15. And it is the super-eminent advantage true Religion hath over all false ones, that it tends to so laudable an end.

The heathen Theology ministred to vice.

22. The Theology of the Heathens was in many instances an extract and quintessence of vice. Their most solemn Rites, and sacredest Mysteries were of such a nature, that instead of refining and elevating, they corrupted and debased their Votaries; immerst them in all those abominable pollutions which sober nature abhorr'd. Whereas the principles of our Faith serve to spiritualize and rectify us, to raise us as much above meer manhood as theirs cast them below it.

We are greatly advantag'd by having just notions of God.

23. And as they are of this vast advantage to us, so also are they just to God, in giving us right notions of him. What vile unworthy apprehensions had the Heathen of their Deities; entitling them not only to the passions but even to the crimes of men: making *Jupiter* an adulterer, *Mercury* a thief, *Bacchus* a drunkard, &c. proportionably of the rest? Whereas our God is represented to us as an essence, so spiritual and incorporal, that we must be unbodied our selves before we can perfectly conceive what he is: so far from the impotent affections and inclinations of men, that he has neither parts, nor passions; and is fain to vail himself under that disguise, to speak sometimes as if he had, meerly in condescension to our grosser faculties. And again, so far from being an example, a patron of vice, that his *eyes are too pure to behold iniquity*, Heb. 1. 13. Holiness is an essential part of his nature, and he must deny himself to put it off.

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24. The greatest descent that ever he made to humanity, was in the Incarnation of the second Person: yet even in that, though he was linked with a sinful nature, yet he preserved the person immaculate; and while he had all the sins of the world upon him by imputation, suffer'd not any one to be inherent in him.

His lowest condescension in taking our human nature.

25. To conclude, the Scripture describes our God to us by all those glorious Attributes of Infinity, Power and Justice, which may render him the proper object of our Adorations and Reverence: and it describes him also in those gentler Attributes of Goodness, Mercy and Truth, which may excite our love of, and dependence on him. These are representations something worthy of God, and such as impress upon our mind great thoughts of him.

As also his other adorable Attributes.

26. But never did the Divine Attributes so concur to exert themselves, as in the mystery of our Redemption: where his Justice was satisfied without diminution to his Mercy; and his Mercy without entrenching on his Justice: his Holiness most eminent in his indignation against sin, and yet his Love no less so in sparing sinners: these contradictions being reconcil'd, this discord compos'd into harmony by his infinite Wisdom. This is that stupendous Mystery into which *the Angels desire to look*, 1 Pet. 1. 12. And this is it which by *the Gospel is preach'd unto us*; as it follows, verse 25.

Above all the mystery of Redemption.

27. And as the Scripture gives us this knowledge of God, so it do's also of our selves, in which two, all profitable knowledge is comprised. It teaches us how vile we were in our original dust; and how much viler yet in our fall, which would have sunk us below our first principles, sent us not only to earth, but hell. It shews the impotence of our lapsed estate; that we are not *able of our selves so much as to think a good thought*: and it shews us also the dignity of our renovated estate, that we *are heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ*, Rom. 8. 17. yet lest this might puff us up with mistaken hopes; it plainly acquaints us with the condition on which this depends; that it must be our obedience both active and passive, which is to intitle us to it: that we must *be faithful to death, if we mean to inherit a crown of life*, Rev. 2. 10. and that *we must suffer with Christ, if we will be glorified with him*, Rom. 8. 17. And upon supposition that we perform our parts of the condition, it gives us the most certain assurance, engages Gods veracity that he will not fail on his. By this it gives us support against all the adversities of life: assuring us *the sufferings of it are not worthy to be compared with the glory we expect*, Rom. 8. 18. yea, and against the terrors of death too; by assuring us that what we look on as a dissolution, is but a temporary parting; and we only put off our bodies, that they may put off corruption, and be clothed with immortality.

The Scripture to the knowledge of God adds that of our selves.

28. These and the like are the Doctrines the Holy Scripture offers to us: and we may certainly say, they are *faithful sayings*, and *worthy of all acceptation*, 1 Tim. 4. 15. The notions it gives us of God are so sublime and great, that they cannot but affect us with reverence and admiration: and yet withal so amiable and endearing, that they cannot but raise love and gratitude, affiance and delight.

The doctrines of the Scripture as they are faithful sayings, so also worthy of all acceptation.

29. And which is yet more, these milder Attributes are apt to inspirit us with a generous ambition of assimilation; excite us to transcribe all his imitable excellencies: in which the very Heathens could discern consisted the accomplishment of human felicity.

And are apt to inspirit with a generous ambition of assimilation.

30. And then the knowledge it gives us of our selves, do's us the kindest office imaginable: keeps us from those swelling thoughts we are too apt to entertain, and shews us the necessity of bottoming our hopes upon a firmer foundation: and then again keeps us from being lazy or secure, by shewing us the necessity of our own endeavours. In a word, it teaches us to be humble and industrious, and whosoever is so ballasted can hardly be shipwrack'd.

The knowledge of our selves obliges to humility.

31. These are the excellencies of the Doctrinal part of Scripture, which also renders them most aptly preparative for the preceptive. And indeed, so they were design'd: the *Credenda* and the *Agenda* being such inseparable relations, that whoever parts them, forfeits the advantage of both. The most solemn profession of Christ, the most importunate invocations, Lord, Lord, will signify nothing to them *which do not the things which he says*, Matt. 7. And how excellent, how rational those precepts are which the Scripture proposes to us from him, is our next point of consideration.

The Credenda and Agenda are inseparably link'd together.

32. The first Law which God gave to mankind was that of nature. And though the impressions of it upon the mind be by *Adam*'s fall exceedingly dimm'd and defac'd; yet that derogates nothing from the dignity and worth of that Law, which has been so far from cancelling, that he seems to have made it the rule and

The Christian law designs the restoring that of nature.

square of his subsequent Laws: so that nothing is injoyn'd in those, but what is consonant and agreeable to that. The Moral Law given in the Decalogue to the Jews, the Evangelical Law given in the Gospel to Christians, have this natural Law for their basis and foundation. They licensse nothing which that prohibits, and very rarely prohibit any thing which it licenses.

And neither contradicts the natural or Jewish law, but rescues the latter from the glosses of Scribes and Pharisees.

33. 'Tis true, Christ in his Sermon on the Mount, raises Christians to a greater strictness than the Jews thought themselves oblig'd to; but that was not by contradicting either the natural or Moral Law, but by rescuing the latter from those corruptions which the false glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees had mixt it with; and reducing it to its primitive integrity, and extent. In a word, as the Decalogue was given to repair the defacings, and renew the impressions of the natural Law; so the precepts of the Gospel were design'd to revive and illustrate both. And accordingly we find Christ, in the matter of divorce, calls them back to this natural Law; *In the beginning it was not so*, Matt. 19. 8. I say not but that even these natural notions are in some instances refin'd and elevated by Christ; the second *Adam* being to repair the fall of the first with advantage: but yet he still builds upon that ground-work, introduces nothing that is inconsistent with it.

The accordance of those laws, is a great recommendation of the Scripture precepts.

34. And this accordance between these several Laws is a circumstance that highly recommends Scripture precepts to us. We cannot imagine but that God who made man for no other end but to be an instrument of his glory, and a recipient of all communicable parts of his happiness, would assign him such rules and measures as were most conducive to those ends. And therefore since the Scripture injunctions are of the same mould, we must conclude them to be such as tend to the perfection of our being; the making us what God originally intended us: and he that would not be that, will certainly chuse much worse for himself.

The commands of our Saviour are unjustly taxed as unreasonable.

35. I know there have been prejudices taken up against the precepts of Christ, as if they impos'd unreasonable, unsupportable strictnesses upon men: and some have assum'd liberty to argue mutinously against them; nay, against God too for putting such natural appetites into men, and then forbidding them to satisfy them.

His restraints are suitable to human nature in Innocence.

36. But the ground of this cavil is the not rightly distinguishing of natural appetites, which are to be differenc'd according to the two states of rectitude and depravation: those of the first rank are the appetites God put into man; and those were all regular and innocent, such as tended to the preservation of his being: nature in its first integrity measuring its desires by its needs. Now Christ's prohibitions are not directed against these, he forbids no one kind of these desires. And though the precept of self denial may sometimes restrain us in some particular acts; yet that is but proportionable to that restraint *Adam* was under in relation to the forbidden tree, a particular instance of his obedience; and fence of his safety. So that if men would consider nature under that its first and best notion, they cannot accuse Christ of being severe to it.

But the appetites of corrupted nature are indeed restrain'd.

37. But 'tis manifest they take it in another acception, and mean that corruption of nature which inordinately inclines to sensitive things; and on this account they call their riots, their luxuries, appetites put into them by God: whereas 'tis manifest this was superinduc'd from another coast: the Wise man gives us its true pedigree in what he says of death, which is its twin-sister: *By the envy of the devil came death into the world*, Wisd. 2. 24. And can they expect that Christ who came to *destroy the works of the devil*, 1 John 3. 8. should frame Laws in their favour, make acts of toleration and indulgence for them? This were to annul the whole design of his coming into the world, which was to restore us from our lapst estate, and elevate us to those higher degrees of purity which he came not only to prescribe, but to exemplify to us.

The most exorbitant pursuits of vice, we call nature.

38. But in this affair men often take nature in a yet wider and worse notion; and under natural desires comprehend whatever upon any sort of motive they have a mind to do. The awe of a superiour, the importunity of a companion, custom, and example, make men do many ill things, to which their nature would never prompt them; nay, many times such as their nature reluds to, and abhors, 'tis certainly thus in all debauchery and excess: 'Tis evident it gratifies no mans nature to be drunk, or to lie under undigested loads of meats: these are out-rages and violences upon nature, take it only in the most sensitive notion, such as she struggles to avert; and yet men make her bear, not only the oppression, but the blame to

Truly speaking, the nature of man includes reason as well as sense.

39. But besides 'tis to be consider'd, that the nature of man includes reason as well as sense, and to this all sorts of luxury are yet more repugnant as that which clouds the mind, and degrades the man (who in his constitution is a rational being)

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and sets him in the rank of meer animals: and certainly these can be no appetites of nature, which thus subvert it.

40. The like may be said concerning revenge, particularly that absurdest sort of it, Duels; which certainly are as great contradictions to nature as can be imagin'd, the unravelling and cancelling its very first principle of Self-preservation, (which in other instances men bring in bar against duty.) And yet men will say the generosity of their natures compels them to it; so making their natures a kind of *felo de se* to prompt the destroying it self: when alas 'tis only the false notion they have got of honour that so engages them. And if men would but soberly consider, they must be convinc'd that there is nothing more agreeable to reason than that precept of Christ of not retaliating injuries; which is in effect but to chuse a single inconvenience before a long train of mischiefs. And certainly if nature even in its deprav'd estate were left to determine, it would resolve it a better bargain to go off with a reproachful word, than to lose a limb, perhaps a life in the revenge of it. There being no maxim more indisputable, than that of evils the least is to be chosen. And the innate principle of Self-love do's more strongly biass nature to preserve it self, than any external thing can to destroy it.

Revenge is no true foundation.

41. I know 'twill be said to this, that revenge is a natural appetite: but I say still, Self-preservation is more so; and would prevail against as much of revenge as is natural, were it not heightned and fortified by fancy, and that Chimera of point of honour, which, as it is now stated, is certainly one of the most empty nothings that ever was brought in balance with solid interests. And indeed 'tis to belie nature, and suppose it to have forfeited all degrees of reason, as well as vertue, to fasten so absurd a choice upon her. But admit revenge to be never so much the dictate of corrupt Nature, revenge is but a relative to injury: and he that will say God put the appetite of revenge into man, must say he put the appetite of injury into him also: which is such an account of the sixth days creation, as is hardly consistent with God's own testimony of its being *very good*, Gen. 1.

Were revenge never so much a natural appetite, 'tis not so fundamental an one as Self-preservation.

42. Besides, 'tis certain all the desires God infus'd into human nature, were such as tended to its preservation; but this of revenge, is of all other the most destructive, as is too sadly attested by the daily tragical effects of it. In short, the Wise man gives a good summary of the whole matter: *God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions*, Eccles. 7. 29.

Which is contradicted and destroyed by revenge.

43. Now if man hath by his own voluntary act depriv'd himself, it would be neither just nor kind in God to warp his Laws to mans now distorted frame; but it is both, to keep up the perfect rectitude of those, and call upon man to reduce himself to a conformity with them: and when to this is added such a supply of Grace as may silence the plea of disability, there can nothing be imagin'd more worthy of God, or more indulgent to man.

Were it otherwise, God's Laws ought to controul our passions.

44. And all this Christ do's in the Gospel, in those precepts which the blind world makes subject to their cavil or scorn. It were an easy task to evince this in every particular precept of the Gospel; but I shall content my self with the instances already given, and not swell this Tract by insisting upon what has already been the subject of so many pious and excellent discourses, as must already have convinc'd all but the obstinate.

Which really are kindnesses to us.

45. We proceed therefore to a view of the promissory parts of Scripture; in which we are first in general to observe the great goodness of God, in making any promises at all to us; and next to examine of what nature and excellence these promises are. And first if we consider how many titles God has to our obedience, we must acknowledge he may challenge it has his undoubted right. We are the work of his hands; and if the Potter have power over the clay (the materials whereof are not of his making) much more has God over his creatures, whose matter as well as form is wholly owing to him. We are the price of his blood. And if men account purchase an indefeisible title, God must have absolute dominion over what he has bought, and at so dear a price too as his own blood. Lastly, we depend upon him for the support of that being he has given us: we live meerly upon his bounty, spend upon his stock. And what Patron will not expect observance from one who thus subsists by him?

Fourthly, the promissory part.

46. Yet as if God had none of these claims, these preingagements upon us, he descends to treat with us as freemen, by way of article and compact; buys his own [illegible] us, and engages to reward that obedience, which he might upon the utmost [illegible]ties exact: which is such an astonishing indulgence as our highest gratitude cannot [illegible]ch: and of this the Sacred Scriptures are the evidences and records; and therefore upon that account deserve at once our reverence, and our joy.

God waves native rights and treats us as freemen

47. But

His promises are so extensive as to take in both our present and future state.

47. But this will yet farther appear, if we look in the second place into the promises themselves; which are so extensive as to take in both our present and future state: according to that of the Apostle; *Godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. For the present they are proportion'd to the several parts of our composition, the body and the mind, the outward and the inward man; so stretching themselves to all we can really be concern'd for in this world.

48. And first for the body, the Old Testament abounds in promises of this sort. The first part of the 28. of *Deut.* contains a full catalogue of all temporal blessings; and those irreversibly entail upon the Israelites obedience. The Psalmist tells us, *they that fear the Lord shall lack nothing*, Psal. 34. 9. *that they shall not be confounded in the perillous time, and in days of dearth they shall have enough*, Psal. 37. 19. And *Solomon, that the Lord will not suffer the righteous to famish*, Prov. 10. 3. And though under the Gospel, the promises of temporal affluence seem not so large, (its design being to spiritualize us, and raise our minds to higher injoyments;) yet it gives us ample security of so much as is really good for us. It supersedes our care for our selves by assuring us *all these things shall be added to us*, Matt. 6. 3. that is, *all those things which our heavenly Father knows we have need of*, v. 32. which is all the limitation the context gives. And certainly we have little temptation to fear want, who have him for our provider, *whose are all the beasts of the forest, and the cattel upon a thousand hills*, Psal. 50. 10.

When he has secur'd us from want; 'twill be as great a largess to secure us from abundance.

49. And when we are thus secur'd of all things necessary, it may perhaps be an equal mercy to secure us from great abundance; which at the best is but a *lading ones self with thick clay*, in the Prophets phrase, *Hab.* 2. 6. but is often a snare as well as a burden.

The Gospel's contradicting our appetites makes a better provision for us than any affluence could bestow.

50. Besides, the Gospel by its preceps of temperance and self-denial, do's so contract our appetites, that a competence is a more adequate promise to them, than that of superfluity would have been: and 'tis also the measure wherein all the true satisfaction of the senses consist; which are gratify'd with moderate pleasures, but suffocated and overwhelm'd with excessive. The temperate man tasts and relishes his portion, whilst the voluptuous may rather be said to wallow in his plenty than enjoy it.

Not only the necessaries of life, but life it self is secur'd by Scripture promise.

51. And as the necessaries of this life, so life it self, and the continuance of that, is a Scripture promise. The fifth Commandment affixes it to one particular duty: but it is in a multitude of places in the Old Testament annex'd to general obedience. Thus it is, *Deut.* 11. 9. and again v. 21. And *Solomon* proposes this practical wisdom as the multiplier of days: *By me days shall be multiply'd, and the years of thy life shall be increas'd*, Prov. 9. 11. and chap. 3. *Length of days is in her right hand*, verse 16. And though we find not this promise repeated in the New Testament, yet neither is it retracted: 'tis true the Gospel bids us be ready to lay down our lives for Christ's sake, but it tells us withal, that he that will lose his life, shall save it: which though it be universally true only in the spiritual sense, yet it often proves so in a literal. It did so eminently in the destruction of *Jerusalem*, where the most resolute Christians escap'd, while the base compliers perish'd together with those they sought to endear. This is certain, that if the New Testament do not expresly promise long life, yet it do's by its rules of temperance and sobriety, contentedness and chearfulness, very much promote it: and so do's vertually and efficaciously ratify those the Old Testament made.

So also is reputation.

52. The next outward blessing is reputation: and this also is a Scripture promise. *The wise shall inherit glory*, Prov. 3. 38. And the vertuous woman *Solomon* describes, is not only blessed by her children and husband, but *she is praised in the gate*, Prov. 31. *ult.* Nay, this blessing is extended even beyond life: *The memory of the just shall be blessed*, Prov. 10. 7. Nor do's the Gospel evacuate this promise; but rather prompts us to the ways of having it made good to us, by advising us to *abstain from all appearance of evil*, 1 Thess. 5. 22. *to provide for honest things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men*, 1 Cor. 8. 21.

If revilings happen, they are made most honourable.

53. 'Tis true indeed, Christ forewarns his Disciples that they shall be revil'd, *and have all manner of evil spoken against them falsly, for his names sake*: but then the form transform'd the sufferings, and made it so honorable, that they were *to count it matter of joy*, Matt. 5. 11, 12. Neither was this any paradox even in relation to their reputation; which though sullied by a few ill men of that age, yet has been most illustrious among all Ages since. Their sufferings and indignities gave them a new title of honour, and added the Martyr to the Apostle. And the event

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been proportionable in all successions since: those holy men that fill'd up the Pagan prisons fill'd up the Churches Dipticks also, and have been had as the Psalmist speaks, *in everlasting remembrance*, Psal. 112. 6.

54. And as the Scripture-promises thus take in all the concerns of the outward man, so do they also of the inward. The fundamental promise of this kind is that of *sending Christ into the world*, and *in him establishing the new Covenant*, which we find, *Jer.* 31. 31. and is referr'd to by the Author to the Hebrews, *I will put my Laws in their hearts, and write them in their minds, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*, Heb. 10. 16.

The Scripture promises look more expresly to be concerns of the inward man.

55. And this is so comprehensive a promise as includes all the concerns of the inward man. The evils incident to the mind of man may be reduc'd to two; impurity, and inquietude: and here is a cure to both. The Divine Law written in the heart, drives thence all those swarms of noysom lusts, which like the Egyptian Frogs over-run and putrify the soul. Where that is seated and enshrin'd, those can no more stand before it than *Dagon* before the Ark. This repairs the divine Image in us (in which consists the perfection of our nature) *renews us in the spirits of our minds*, Ephes. 4. 22. *and purges our consciences from dead works*, Heb. 9. 4. which all the Carthartick and Lustrations among the Heathen, and all the Sacrifices and Ceremonies of the Law were not able to do.

Whose evils are either impurity, or inquietude.

56. Secondly this Promise secures the mind from that restlesness and unquietness which attends both the dominion and guilt of sin. To be subject to a man's lusts and corrupt appetites is of all other the vilest vassallage, they are the cruellest task-masters, and allow their slaves no rest, no intermission of their drudgery. And then again, the guilt that tortures and racks the mind with dreadful expectations, keeps it in perpetual agitation and tumult; which is excellently describ'd by the Prophet *Isaiah*, *The wicked is like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest; whose waters cast out mire and dirt: there is no peace saith my God to the wicked*, Isai. 48. 22. How prosperous soever vice may seem to be in the world, yet there are such secret pangs and horrours that dog it, that as *Solomon* says, *even in laughter the heart is sorrowful*, Prov. 14. 13.

The subjection to lust is the vilest vassallage.

57. But this Evangelical promise of being *merciful to our iniquities, and remembring our sins no more*, calms this tempest, introduces peace and serenity into the mind, and reconciles us at once to God and our selves. And sure we may well say with the Apostle, these are *great and precious promises*, 2 Pet. 1. 4.

From which the Gospel rescues.

58. There are besides many other which spring from this principal, as suckers from the root: such are the promises of fresh supplies of grace upon a good employment of the former. *To him that has shall be given*, Matt. 25. 29. Nay, even of the source and fountain of all grace. *He shall give the holy Spirit to them that ask him*, Matt. 7. 11. Such is that of supporting us in all difficulties and assaults: *the not suffering us to be tempted above that we are able*, 1 Cor. 10. 13. which like God's *bow set in the clouds*, Gen. 9. is our security, that we shall not be overwhelm'd by any deluge of temptation: and (to instance no more) such is that comprehensive promse of hearing our prayers, *Ask, and it shall be given you*, Matt. 7. 7. This puts all good things within our reach, gives us the key of God's Store-house, from whence we may furnish our selves with all that is really good for us. And if a few full Barns could tempt the rich man in the Gospel, to pronounce a Requiem to his soul; what notes of acquiescence may they sing, who have had the command of an inexhaustible store; that are supply'd by him whose is the earth, and the fulness thereof?

The Scriptures give promises of grace and Divine assistance.

59. And certainly, all these promises together must be (to use the Apostle's phrase) *strong consolation*; such as may quiet and calm all the fears and griefs, all the tumults and perturbations of the mind, in relation to its present state. But then there are others relating to the future of a much higher elevation: those glories and felicities of another world, which are so far beyond our narrow conceptions, that the comprehension and injoyment must begin together. The Scripture shadows it out to us by all the notions we have of happiness, by *glory*, Rom. 8. 18. by a *kingdom*, Matt. 25. 14. by *joy*, Matt. 25. 21. and which comprehends all, by *being with the Lord*, 1 Thes. 7. 17. *seeing him face to face*, 1 Cor. 13. 12. *being like to him*, 1 John 3. 2. In a word, 'tis *bliss* in the utmost extent: immense for quantity, and eternal for duration.

Than which nothing can give greater comfort and support amidst the calamities of life.

60. And surely this promise is so excellent for kind, so liberal in its degree, so transcendently great in all respects, that did it stand single, strip'd of all those that relate to this life, it alone would justify the name of Gospel, and be the best tidings that ever came to mankind. For alas, if we compare the hopes that other Reli-

The promises are of things excellent in their kind as well as liberal in their degree.

gions propose to their Votaries with these, how base, how ignoble are they! The Heathens Elysium, the Mahumetan Paradise, were but higher gratifications of the sensual part, and consequently were depressions and debasements of the rational. So that in effect they provided a heaven for the beast, and a hell for the man. We may therefore confidently resume our conclusion, and pronounce the Scripture promises to be so divine and excellent, that they could as little have been made, as they can be perform'd by any but an Holy and Almighty Author.

Their condition such as is no impeachment of their worth.

61. Nor is their being conditional any impeachment to their worth, but an inhancement. Should God have made them (as some fancy he has his decrees) absolute and irrespective; he had set his promises at war with his precepts, and these should have superseded what those injoyn. We are all very niggardly towards God, and should have been apt to have ask'd *Judas*'s question; *to what purpose is this waste?* Matt. 26. 8. What needs the labour of the course, if the prize be certain? And it must have been infinitely below the wisdom and majesty of the supream Legislator, to make Laws, and then evacuate them by dispensing rewards without any aspect on their observance. 'Tis the Sanction which inspirits the Law, without which the Divine, as well as the Human, would to most men be a *dead letter*.

The conditionality of the promises, backt with threats are design'd to force us to happiness.

62. But against this God has abundantly provided, not only by the conditionality of the promises, but by the terrour of his threats too; which is the last part of Scripture which falls under consideration. And these are the most direful kinds; and cannot better be illustrated than by the opposition they stand in to the promises: for as those included all things that might make men happy, either as to this life or the next; so these do all that make them miserable. If we make our reflection on all the particulars of the promises, we shall find the threats answering them as their reverse or dark shadow.

First the threats that concern the outward state.

63. And first as concerning the outward state, if we look but into the 28. of *Deut.* we shall find, that after all the gracious promises which begun the chapter, it finally ends in thunder, in the most dreadful denunciations imaginable; and those adapted by a most peculiar opposition to the former promises, as the Reader may see at large in that chapter. And the whole tenor of the Scripture go's in the like stile. Thus Psal. 140. 11. *A wicked person shall not prosper in the earth, evil shall hunt the wicked man to overthrow him. The Lord will not suffer the righteous to famish, but he casteth out the substance of the wicked,* Prov. 10. 3. And again, the *righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul, but the belly of the wicked shall want,* Prov. 13. 25. Multitudes of like general threatnings of temporal improsperity there are every where scatter'd throughout the Scripture; and many more apply'd to particular vices, as sloth, unmercifulness, luxury, and the like; which would be here too long to enumerate.

Which are verified notwithstanding the seeming prosperity of wicked men.

64. And although these threatnings may seem sometimes to be litterally confuted by the wealth and opulency of wicked men, yet they never miss of being really and vertually verified. For either their prosperities are very short, and only preparative to a more eminent ruin, which was the Psalmists resolution of this doubt, *Psal.* 73. or else if God leave them the matter of temporal happiness, yet he substracts the vertue and spirit of them, renders them empty and unsatisfying. This is well exprest by the Psalmist in the case of the Israelites: *He gave them their desires, and sent leanness withal into their soul,* Psal. 106. 15. and by *Zophar*, Job 20. 22. where speaking of the wicked, he saith; *In the fulness of his sufficiency shall he be in straits.* And to this *Solomon* seems to refer, when he saith, *the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, he addeth no sorrow with it,* Prov. 10. 22.

Not only untimely death, but the rotting of the name and a curse of their posterity, are threatned to wicked men.

65. Neither is it only the comforts of life, but life it self that is threatned to be taken from wicked men: untimely death is throughout the Old Testament frequently mention'd as the guerdon of impiety: 'tis often assign'd judicially in particular cases: *He shall be cut off from his people*, being the usual sentence upon most offenders under the Levitical Law. But 'tis also menac'd more generally as an immediate judgment from God: *The blood thirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days,* Psal. 55. 23. Farther yet, their names shall putrify as soon as their Carcasses; *the name of the wicked shall rot,* Prov. 10. 7. Nay both their infamy and their ruin are intail'd upon their posterity. *The seed of evil doers shall never be renown'd. Prepare slaughter for his children, for the iniquity of their fathers,* Isai. 14. 20, 21.

Wicked men are aliens from the covenant of Grace

66. If now we look on Scripture threatnings in relation to the mind of man, we shall find them yet more severe: wilful impenitent sinners being cut off from the benefits of the New Covenant; nor barely so, but look'd upon as despisers of it, and that Blood of Christ in which it was seal'd, *Heb.* 10. 29. nay as those murderous wretches that shed it: *They crucifie to themselves the Son of God afresh,* Heb. 6. 6. And

this is the fatallest sentence that can fall on any man in this life; and be thus disfranchised of all the priviledges of the Gospel, and rankt as well in punishment as guilt, with the most criminous of mankind.

67. From hence 'tis consequent, that the mind remains not only in its native impurity, but in a greater and more incurable one; whilst that Blood which alone could cleanse it, serves but to imbrue and pollute it; and as it were flush, and excite it to all immanities and vilenesses: and *he that is* thus *filthy*, 'tis the doom pronounc'd against him, that he *shall be filthy still*. Rev. 22. 11.

And at last brought to a state of reprobation.

68. And then in the second place, what calm can there be to such a mind? What remains to such a person, but that *fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation*, which the Apostle mentions, *Heb.* 10. 27? Indeed, were there none but temporal mischiefs to fear, yet it were very unpleasant to think ones self, like *Cain*, out-law'd from the presence and protection of God, to be affraid *that every man that meets us should slay us*, Gen. 4. 14. Nay, those diffus'd instinct fears of indefinite evils which attend guilt, are very unquiet, uneasy inmates in the mind. This is excellently describ'd by *Moses*; *The Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind, and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and then thou shalt fear day and night; in the morning thou shalt say, would God it were evening, and in the evening would God it were morning*, Deut. 28. 65, 66, 67.

Nothing can be more miserable than this profligate condition.

69. And what can be more wretched than to have a mind thus agitated and toss'd, rackt and tortur'd; especially when through all these clouds it sees a glimpse of the eternal Tophet, and knows, that from the billows of this uneasy state, it must be toss'd into that Lake of fire. And this is indeed *the dregs of the cup of Gods wrath*, the dreadfullest and most astonishing of all Scripture denunciations. This comprehends all that the nature of man is capable of suffering. Divines distinguishing it into the pain of sense, and of loss: that of sense is represented to us in Scripture by fire; and that accended, and rendred noisom as well as painful by brimstone, that afflicts the smell as well as the touch: sometimes by *outer darkness wailing and gnashing of teeth*, to grate the ears, and consume the eyes; by intolerable thirst, to torment the palate. Not that we are to think the sensitive pains of Hell do not infinitely exceed all these; but because these are the highest measures our present capacities can make, and are adequate to those senses for whose carnal satisfactions we incur them.

God's wrath comprehends all that human nature can suffer.

70. The pain of loss is yet more dismal; as being seated in the Soul, whose spiritual nature will serve it only to render its torments more refin'd and acute. With what anguish will it then see it self banish'd from the presence of God; and consequently from all that may give satisfaction and bliss to the creature? But yet with how much deeper anguish will it reflect on it self as the Author of that deprivation? How will it recollect the many despis'd tenders of Grace, the easy terms on which salvation might have been had? and how sadly will conscience then revenge all its stifled admonitions by an unsilenceable clamour, *that worm which never dies*, Mark 9. 48? How wounding will it then be *to see* Abraham, Isaac *and* Jacob, and all the Saints *in the kingdom of God*, Luke 13. 28. (nay, that poor *Lazarus* whom here men turn'd to the charity of their dogs) and it self in the company of the devil, and his angels, who will then upbraid what they once intic'd to?

Pain of sense seems outdone by that of loss.

71. Nature abhors nothing more than to have our misery insulted over by those who drew us into it: yet that no circumstance may be lacking to their torment, this must be the perpetual entertainment of damn'd souls. And to all this Eternity is the dismal adjunct; which is of all other circumstances the most disconsolate, as leaving not so much as a glimpse of hopes; which here uses still to be the reserve, and last resort of the miserable.

Which has the embitterments of shame and despair.

72. This Eternity is that which gives an edge, infuses a new acrimony into the torment: and is the highest strain, the vertical point of misery. These are those *terrours of the Lord*, with which the Scripture acquaints us: and sure we cannot say that these are flat contemptible menaces; but such as suit the dreadful Majesty of that *God who is a consuming fire*, Heb. 12. 29. So that these are as aptly accommodated for the exciting our dread, as the promises were of our love: both jointly concur to awake our industry.

Especially having that last heightning circumstance of Eternity.

73. For God has been so good to mankind, as to make the threats conditional as well as the promises: so that we as well know the way to avoid the one, as we do to attain the other. Nor has he any other intendment or end in promising them, but that we may do so. See to this purpose, with what solemnity he protests it by *Moses*; *I call heaven and earth to record against you this day that I have set*

But God's goodness has made these threats conditional as well as his promises.

before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore chuse life, that both thou and thy seed may live, Deut. 30. 19.

In all respects the Scripture appears to be correspondent to its Author. 74. I have now run through the several parts of Scripture I proposed to speak of. And though I have in each given rather short Instances and essays than an exact description, yet even in these contracted lineaments the exquisite proportions may be discern'd. And if the Reader shall hence be incourag'd to extend his contemplations, and as he reads Holy Scripture, observe it in all its graces, and full dimensions; I doubt not he will pronounce from his experience, that the matter of the Divine Book is very correspondent to the Author: which is the highest Eulogy imaginable.

The Holy Scripture consider'd in relation to its end. 75. In the next place we are to consider the Holy Scripture in relation to its end and design; in proportion to which every thing is more or less valuable. The most exquisite frame, and curious contrivance, that has no determinate end or use, is but a piece of industrious folly, a *Spider's web*, as the Prophet speaks, *Isai.* 59. 5. Now those designs have always been esteem'd the most excellent that have had the most worthy subjects, and been of the greatest extent. Accordingly, those who have projected the obliging and benefiting of other men (though but within a private Sphere) have always been look'd on as men of generous and noble designs. Those who have taken their level higher, and directed their aim to a more publick good, though but of a City or Nation, have proportionably acquir'd a greater esteem. But those who have aspired to be universal benefactors, to do something for the common benefit of the world, their fame has commonly reach'd as far as their influence; men have reverenc'd, nay sometime (according to the common excesses of man's nature) ador'd them. Many of the heathen Deities (especially their Demigods) having been only those persons, who by introducing some useful Art, or other part of knowledge, had oblig'd mankind. So we see what a natural gratitude men are apt to pay to worthy and generous designs. And if we will be content but to stand to this common award of our nature, the Scripture will have the fairest claim imaginable to our reverence and thankfulness upon this very account of the excellency of its designs.

Things are valuable with us from the profit they bring, and their diffusiveness. 76. Nor need we borrow the balance of the Sanctuary to weigh them in, we may do it in our own scales; for they exactly answer the two properties above mention'd, of profit and diffusiveness, which in secular concerns are the standard rules of good designs. For first, it is the sole scope and aim of Scripture, the very end for which 'twas writ, to benefit and advantage men; and that secondly, not only some small select number, some little angle or corner of the world, but the whole race of mankind, the entire universe; and he that can imagine a more diffusive design, must imagine more worlds also.

The end of the Scripture is our good. 77. Now for the first of these, that it is the design of the Scripture to benefit men, we need appeal but to Scripture it self; which surely can give account to what end 'tis directed; and that tells us, it *is to make us wise unto Salvation*, 2 Tim. 3. 15. In which is comprehended the greatest benefit that mens nature is capable of: the making us wise while we live here, and the saving us eternally. And this sure is the most generous, the most obliging design, that 'tis possible even for the Creator to have upon the Creature: and this is it which the Holy Scripture negotiates with us.

To make wise. 78. And first, the making us wise, is so inviting a proposal to humanity, that we see when that was much wiser than now it is, it caught at a fallacious tender of it; the very sound of it, though out of the devils mouth, fascinated our first Parents, and hurried them to the highest disobedience, and certainest ruin. And therefore now God by the Holy Scriptures makes us an offer as much more safe, as it is more sincere; when he sends his Word to us to be *a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths*, Psal. 119. 105. to teach us all that is good for us to know, our affectation of ignorance will be more culpable than theirs of knowledge, if we do not admire the kindness, and embrace the bounty of such a tender.

Not indeed in the popular notion. 79. Now the making us wise must be understood according to the Scripture notion of wisdom, which is *not the wisdom of this world, nor of the Princes of this world, which come to nought*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 2. 5. *but that wisdom which descends from above*, Jam. 3. 17. which he there describes to be *first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.* Indeed the Scripture usually comprehends these and all other graces under Wisdom; for it makes it synonymous to that which includes them all, *viz.* the fear of the Lord. Thus we find throughout the whole Book of Proverbs these us'd as terms convertible. In short, Wisdom is that practical knowledge of God and our

selves

ſelves, which engages us to obedience and duty; and this is agreeable to that definition the Wiſe-man gives of it; *The wiſdom of the prudent is to underſtand his way*, Prov. 14. 8. Without this, all the moſt refin'd and aerial ſpeculations, are but like *Tales*'s ſtar-gazing; which ſecur'd him not from falling into the water; nay, betrayed him to it. In this is all ſolid wiſdom compris'd.

80. The utmoſt all the wiſe men in the world have pretended to, is but to know what true happineſs is, and what is the means of attaining it: and what they ſought with ſo much ſtudy, and ſo little ſucceſs, the Scripture preſents us with in the greateſt certainty, and plaineſt characters, ſuch as *he that runs may read*, Hab. 2. 2. It acquaints us with that ſupreme felicity, that chief good whereof Philoſophy could only give us a name; and it ſhews us the means, marks us out a path which will infallibly lead us to it. Accordingly we find that *Solomon* after all the accurate ſearch he had made to find *what was that good for the ſons of men*; he ſhuts up his inqueſt in this plain concluſion: *Fear God and keep his commandments; for God ſhall bring every work unto judgment*, Eccleſ. 12. 15, 16. The regulating our lives ſo by the rules of Piety, as may acquit us at our final account, is the moſt eligible thing that falls within human cognizance; and that not only in relation to the ſuperlative happineſs of the next world, but even to the quiet and tranquillity of this. For alas, we are impotent giddy creatures, ſway'd ſometimes by one paſſion, ſometimes by another; nay often the interfering of our appetites makes us irreſolute which we are to gratify, whilſt in the interim their ſtruggling agitates and turmoils the mind. And what can be more deſirable in ſuch a caſe, than to put our ſelves under a wiſer conduct than our own; and as oppreſt States uſe to defeat all leſſer pretenders by becoming homagers to ſome more potent: ſo for us to deliver our ſelves from the tyranny of our luſts, by giving up our obedience to him whoſe ſervice is perfect freedom.

It leads to our true intereſts.

81. Were there no other advantage of the exchange, but the bringing us under fixt and determinate Laws, 'twere very conſiderable. Every man would gladly know the terms of his ſubjection, and have ſome ſtanding rule to guide himſelf by; and God's Laws are ſo, we may certainly know what he requires of us: but the mandats of our paſſions are arbitrary and extemporary: what pleaſes them to day, diſguſts them to morrow; and we muſt always be in readineſs to do we know not what, and of all the Arbitrary governments that men either feel or fear, this is doubtleſs the moſt miſerable. I wiſh our apprehenſions of it were but as ſenſible: and then we ſhould think the Holy Scripture did us the office of a Patriot, in offering us a reſcue from ſo vile a ſlavery.

Shews every man the terms of his ſubjection.

82. And that it do's make us this offer, is manifeſt by the whole tenor of the Bible. For firſt it rowzes and awakes us to a ſenſe of our condition, ſhews us that what we call liberty, is indeed the ſaddeſt ſervitude; that *he that committeth ſin, is the ſervant of ſin*, John 8. 34. that thoſe vices which pretend to ſerve and gratify us, do really ſubdue and enſlave us, and fetter when they ſeem to embrace: and whereas the will in all other oppreſſions retains its liberty, this tyranny brings that alſo into vaſſallage: renders our ſpirits ſo mean and ſervile, that we chuſe bondage; are apt to ſay with the Iſraelites, *Let us alone that we may ſerve the Egyptians*, Exod. 14. 12.

Shews the ſervility of being engag'd by luſt and ſenſuality.

83. And what greater kindneſs can be done for people in this forlorn abject condition, than to animate them to caſt off the yoke, and recover their freedom. And to this are moſt of the Scripture exhortations addreſt; as may be ſeen in a multitude of places, particularly in the ſixth chapter to the *Romans*, the whole ſcope whereof is directly to this purpoſe.

And animates to recover liberty.

84. Nor do's it only ſound the alarm, put us upon the conteſt with our enemies, but it aſſiſts us in it, and furniſhes us with that *whole armour of God* which we find deſcrib'd, *Eph.* 6. 13. Nay farther, it excites our courage, by aſſuring us that if we will not baſely ſurrender our ſelves, we can never be overpower'd if we do but ſtand our ground; reſiſt our enemy, he *will fly from us*, James 4. 7. And to that purpoſe it directs us under what banner we are to liſt our ſelves; even his who *hath ſpoiled principalites and powers*, Col. 2. 15. to whoſe conduct and diſcipline if we conſtantly adhere, we cannot miſs of victory.

Gives weapons and armour for the reſcue.

85. And then laſtly it ſets before us the prize of this conqueſt; that we ſhall not only recover our liberty, manumit our ſelves from the vileſt bondage to the vileſt and cruelleſt oppreſſors; but we ſhall be crown'd for it too, be rewarded for being kind to our ſelves, and be made happy eternally hereafter for being willing to be happy here.

Sets before us the prize of the conqueſt.

And qualifies for the rewards of it.

86. And sure these are terms so apparently advantageous, that he must be infinitely stupid, foolish to destruction, that will not thus be made wise unto salvation, that despises or cavils at this Divine Book, which means him so much good, which designs to make him live here generously, and according to the dignity of his nature, and in the next World to have that nature sublimated and exalted, made more capacious of those refin'd and immense felicities, which there await all who will qualify themselves for them; *who* (as the Apostle speaks) *by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life*, Rom. 2. 7.

The Scriptures consult for our temporal interest.

87. But besides the greatest and principal advantages which concern our spiritual interest, it takes in also the care of our secular, directs us to such a managery of our selves, as is naturally apt to promote a quiet and happy life. Its injunction to live peaceably with all men, keeps us out of the way of many misadventures, which turbulent unruly spirits meet with; and so secures our peace. So also as to wealth, it puts us into the fairest road to riches by prescribing diligence in our callings: what is thus got being like sound flesh, which will stick by us; whereas the hasty growth of ill-gotten wealth is but a tumour and impostume, which the bigger it swells, the sooner it bursts and leaves us lanker than before. In like manner it shews us also how to guard our reputation, by *providing honest things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men*, 2 Cor. 8. 21. *abstaining even from all appearance of evil*, 1 Thess. 5. 22. and *making our light shine before men*, Matt. 5. 16. It provides too for our ease and tranquillity, supersedes our anxious cares and solicitudes by directing us to *cast our burden upon the Lord*, Psal. 55. 22. and by a reliance on his providence how to secure to our selves all we really want. Finally it fixes us in all the changes, supports us under all the pressures, comforts us amidst all the calamities of this life, by assuring us they shall *all work together for good to those that love God*, Rom. 8. 28.

And that not only personal, but in reference to communities.

88. Nor do's the Scripture design to promote our interests consider'd only singly and personally, but also in relation to Societies and Communities; it gives us the best rules of distributive and commutative Justice; teaches us to *render to all their dues*, Rom. 13. 7. to keep our words, to observe inviolably all our pacts and contracts; nay though *they prove to our damage*, Psal. 15. 4. and to preserve exact fidelity and truth; which are the sinews of human commerce. It infuses into us noble and generous principles, to prefer a common good before our private: and that highest flight of Ethnick vertue, that of dying for ones Country, is no more than the Scripture prescribes even for our common brethren, 1 *John* 3. 16.

This it do's in reference to all interests, whether civil, ecclesiastical or œconomical.

89. But besides these generals, it descends to more minute drections accommodated to our several circumstances; it gives us appropriate rules in reference to our distinct relation, whether natural, civil, ecclesiastical, or œconomical. And if men would but universally conform to them, to what a blessed harmony would it tune the world? what order and peace would it introduce? there would then be no oppressive Governours, nor mutinous Subjects; no unnatural Parents, nor contumacious Children: no idle Shepherds, or straying Flocks: none of those domestick jars which oft disquiet, and sometimes subvert families: all would be calm and serene; and give us in reality that golden Age, whereof Poets did but dream.

This tendency of the Scripture is acknowledg'd in our publick Judicatories, where no testimony is admitted, till the witness has kist the book.

90. This tendency of the Scripture is remarkably acknowledg'd in all our publick Judicatories, where before any testimony is admitted, we cause the person that is to give his testimony, first to lay hold of with his hands, then with his mouth to kiss the Holy Scriptures: as if it were impossible for those hands, which held the mysteries of Truth, to be immediately imploy'd in working falshood; or that those lips which had ador'd those holy Oracles, should be polluted with perjuries and lies. And I fear, the civil Government is exceedingly shaken at this day in its firmest foundation, by the little regard is generally had of the Holy Scriptures, and what is consequent thereto, the oaths that are taken upon them.

That we have not the Prophecy fulfill'd of beating swords into plow-shares, is not from the defect in the Scripture, but our perverseness

91. 'Tis true, we are far remov'd from that state which *Isaiah* prophecied of under the Gospel, though we have the Bible among us; that when *the Law should go forth of Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, they should beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks*, Isai. 2. 4. but that is not from any defect in it, but from our own perverseness: *we have it*, (as the Apostle speaks in another sense) *as if we had it not*, 1 Cor. 7. 29. We have it, (that is, use it) to purposes widely different from what it means. Some have it as a *Supersedeas* to all the duty it injoyns; and so they can but cap text's, talk glibly of Scripture, are not at all concern'd to practice it: some have it as their Arsenal, to furnish them with weapons, not against their spiritual enemies, but their secular: applying all the damnatory sentences they there find, to all those to whose persons or opinions they

have

have prejudice. And some have it as a Scene of their mirth, a topick of raillery, dress their profane and scurrilous jests in its language; and study it for no other end but to abuse it. And whilst we treat it at this vile rate, no wonder we are never the better for it. For alas, what will it avail us to have the most sovereign Balsom in our possession, if instead of applying it to our wounds, we trample it under our feet.

92. But though we may frustrate the use, we cannot alter the nature of things. God's design in giving us the Scripture was to make us as happy as our nature is capable of being; and the Scripture is excellently adapted to this end: for as to our eternal felicity, all that believe there is any such state, must acknowledge the Scripture chalks us out the ready way to it: not only because 'tis dictated by God who infallibly knows it, but also by its prescribing those things which are in themselves best; and which a sober Heathen would adjudge fittest to be rewarded. And as to our temporal happiness, I dare appeal to any unprejudic'd man, whether any thing can contribute more to the peace and real happiness of mankind, than the universal practice of the Scripture rules would do. Would God we would all conspire to make the experiment; and then doubtless, not only our reason, but our sense too would be convinc'd of it.

Though we can frustrate the use, we cannot alter the nature of things.

93. And as the design is thus beneficial, so in the second place is it as extensive also. Time was when the Jews had the inclosure of Divine Revelation; when the Oracles of God were their peculiar *depositum*, and the *Heathen had not the knowledge of his Laws*, Psal. 147. *ult.* but since that by the goodness of God the *Gentiles are* become *fellow-heirs*, Eph. 3. 6. he hath also deliver'd into their hands the deeds and evidences of their future state, given them the Holy Scriptures as the exact and authentick registers of the covenant between God and man, and these not to be like the heathen Oracles appropriated to some one or two particular places, so that they cannot be consulted but at the expence of a pilgrimage; but laid open to the view of all that will believe themselves concern'd.

The benefit of the Scripture is as extensive as great.

94. It was a large commission our Saviour gave his Disciples: *go preach the Gospel to every creature*, Mark 16. 15. (which in the narrowest acception must be the Gentile world) and yet their oral Gospel did not reach farther than the written: for whereever the Christian Faith was planted, the Holy Scriptures were left as the records of it; nay, as the conservers of it too, the standing rule by which all corruptions were to be detected. 'Tis true, the entire Canon of the Testament, as we now have it, was not all at once deliver'd to the Church; the Gospels and Epistles being successively writ, as the need of Christians, and the encrochments of Hereticks gave occasion: but at last they became all together the common magazine of the Church, to furnish arms both defensive and offensive. For as the Gospel puts in our hands the shield of Faith, so the Epistles help us to hold it, that it may not be wrested out of our hands again, either by the force of persecution, or the sly insinuations of vice or heresy.

The Gospel is preach'd to every creature.

95. Thus the Apostles like prudent leaders have beat up the Ambushes, discover'd the snares that were laid for us; and by discomfiting Satans forlorn hope, that earliest Set of false teachers and corrupt practices which then invaded the Church, have laid a foundation of victory to the succeeding Ages, if they will but keep close to their conduct, adhere to those sacred Writings they have left behind them in every Church for that purpose.

And consign'd in writing, not only to establish Faith but discover and beat down growing errors.

96. Now what was there deposited, was design'd for the benefit of every particular member of that Church. The Bible was not committed (like the *Regalia*, or rarities of a Nation) to be kept under lock and key (and consequently to constitute a profitable office for the keepers) but expos'd like the Brazen Serpent for universal view and benefit: that sacred Book (like the common air) being every mans propriety, yet no mans inclosure: yet there are a generation of men whose eyes have been evil, because God's have been good: who have seal'd up this spring, monopoliz'd the word of Life, and will allow none to partake of it but such persons, and in such proportions as they please to retail it: and attempt very insolent in respect of God, whose purpose they contradict; and very injurious in respect of man, whose advantage they obstruct. The iniquity of it will be very apparent, if we consider what is offer'd in the following Section.

Which writings as they are every ones concern and property, are no mans inclosure.

Sect. IV.

The Custody of the Holy Scripture is a privilege and right of the Christian Church, and every member of it; which cannot without impiety to God, and injustice unto it and them, be taken away or impeach'd.

The keeping of the Law is either obsequious or possessory.

1. BESIDES the keeping of the Divine Law, which is obsequious aud imports a due regard to all its Precepts, commonly exprest in Scripture by *keeping the commandments, hearkning to, and obeying the voice of the Lord, walking in his ways, and observing and doing his statutes and his judgments*: there is a possessory keeping it, in reference to our selves and others; in respect whereof, Almighty God, *Deut.* 6. and elsewhere frequently having enjoyn'd the people of *Israel, to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their might, and that the words which he commanded them should be in their hearts,* he adds *that they shall teach them diligently to their children, and shall talk of them when they sit down in their houses, and when they walk by the way, and when they lie down and when they rise up: and that they bind them for a sign upon their hand, and that they shall be as frontlets between their eyes, and that they shall write them upon the posts of their house, and on their gates.* So justly was the Law call'd the Scripture, being written by them, and worn upon the several parts of the body, inscrib'd upon the walls of their houses, the entrance of their doors, and gates of their Cities; and in a word, placed before their eyes whereever they convers'd.

The possessory keeping was matter of privilege to the Jews.

2. And this was granted to the Jews, as matter of privilege and favour: *To them,* says Saint *Paul,* Rom. 9. 4. *pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law.* And the same Saint *Paul,* at the 3. chap. 2. v. of that Epistle, unto the question, *what advantage hath the Jew, or what profit is their circumcision,* answers, that it is *much every way, chiefly because unto them were committed the Oracles of God.* This *depositum* or trust was granted to the Fathers, that it should be continued down unto the children. *He made a covenant,* says *David,* Psal. 78. v. 5. *with Jacob, and gave Israel a law, which he commanded our fore-fathers to teach their children, that their posterity might know it, and the children which are yet unborn: to the intent that when they came up, they might shew their children the same.* Which Scripture by a perpetual succession was to be handed down unto the Christian Church; the Apostles on all occasions appealing unto them, as being *read in the synagogues every sabbath day,* Acts 13: 27. and also privately, in their hands; so that they might at pleasure *search into them,* John 5. 39. Acts 17. 11. Hereupon the Jews are by Saint *Austin* call'd the *Capsarii,* or servants that carried the Christians Books, and *Athanasius* in his Tract of the Incarnation, says, *The Law was not for the Jews only, nor were the Prophets sent for them alone; but that Nation was the Divinity-School of the whole World; from whence they were to fetch the knowledge of God, and the way of spiritual living*: which amounts to what the Apostle says, Gal. 3 24. *That the Law was a School-master to bring us unto Christ.*

And is continued to the Christians.

3. And 'tis observable that the very same word, *Rom.* 3. 2. in the Text even now recited, which expresses the *committing* of the Oracles of God to the Jews, is made use of constantly by Saint *Paul,* when he declares the trust and duty incumbent on him in the preaching of the Gospel: of which, see 1 *Cor.* 9. 17. *Gal.* 2. 7. 1 *Thes.* 2. 4. 1 *Tim.* 1. 11. *Tit.* 1. 3. And therefore, as he says, 1 *Cor.* 9. 16, 17. *Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me, yea, wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel, for if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me.* So may all Christians say; if we our selves keep and transmit to our posterities the Holy Scriptures, we have nothing to glory of, for a necessity is laid upon us, and wo be unto us if we do not our selves keep, and transmit to our posterity the Holy Scriptures. If we do this thing willingly, we have a reward; but if against our will, the custody of the Gospel, and at last that dispensation of it, is committed to us. But if we are Traditors, and give up our Bibles, or take them away from others; let us consider how black an apostacy and sacrilege we shall incur.

4. The

4. The Mosaick Law was a temporary constitution, and only *a shadow of good things to come*, Heb. 10. 1. but the Gospel being in its duration as well as its intendment, *everlasting*, Rev. 14. 6. and to remain *when time shall be no more*, Rev. 10. 6. it is an infinitely more precious *depositum*, and so with greater care and solemner attestation to be preserv'd. Not only the Clergy, or the people of one particular Church, nor the Clergy of the universal are intrusted with this care; but 'tis the charge, the privilege and duty of every Christian man, that either is, or was, or shall be in the world; even that collective Church which above all competition, *is the pillar and ground of truth*, 1 Tim. 3. 15. against which the assaults of man and devils, and even the *gates of hell shall not prevail*, Matt. 16. 18.

The Mosaick law was a temporary constitution.

5. The Gospels were not written by their holy Penmen to instruct the Apostles, but to the Christian Church, *that they might believe Jesus was the Christ, the son of God, and that believing they might have life through his name*, John 20. 41. The Epistles were not addrest peculiarly to the Bishops and Deacons, *but all the holy brethren, to the churches of God that are sanctified in Jesus Christ, and to all those that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. 1. 7. 1 Cor. 1. 2. 2 Cor. 1. 1. Gal. 1. 2. Eph. 1. 1. Col. 4. 16. 1 Thes. 5. 27. Phil. 1. 1. Jam. 1. 1. 1 Pet. 1. 1. 2 Pet. 1. 1. Rev. 1. 4. Or if by chance some one or two of the Epistles were addrest to an Ecclesiastick person, as those to *Timothy* and *Titus*; their purport plainly refers to the community of Christians, and the *depositum* committed to their trust; *1 Tim. 6. 20.* And Saint *John* on the other side directs his Epistles to those who were plainly secular; to fathers, Young Men, and Little Children: and a Lady and her Children, Epist. 1. chap. 2. 12, 13, 14. and Epist. 2. 1. 1.

The Gospels and Epistles were directed to the Christian Church.

6. But besides the interest which every Christian has in the custody of the Scripture upon the account of its being a *depositum* intrusted to him, he has also another no less forcible; that 'tis the Testament of his Saviour, by which he becomes a Son of God, *no more a servant but a Son; and if he be a Son*, it is the Apostle's inference, that he is *then an heir, and heir of God through Christ*, Gal. 4. 7. Now as he who is heir to an estate, is also to the deeds and conveyance thereof; which without injury cannot be detain'd, or if they be, there is a remedy at Law for the recovery of them; so it fares in our Christian inheritance: every Believer by the privilege of faith, is made a son of *Abraham*, and an heir of the promises made unto the fathers, whereby he has an hereditary interest in the Old Testament; and also by the privilege of the same Faith he has a firm right to the *purchast possession*, Eph. 1. 14. and the charter thereof, the New. Therefore the detention of the Scriptures, which are made up of these two parts, is a manifest injustice, and sacrilegious invasion of right, which the person wrong'd is impower'd, nay is strictly oblig'd by all lawful means to vindicate.

These are not a bare depositum, but the Testament of our Saviour.

7. Which invasion of right will appear more flagrant when the nature and importance of it is consider'd; which relating to mens spiritual interests, renders the violation infinitely more injurious than it could be in any secular. I might mention several detriments consequent to this detention of Scripture, even as many as there are benefits appendant to the free use of it; but there is one of so fundamental and comprehensive a nature, that I need name no more; and that is, that it delivers men up to any delusion their teachers shall impose upon them by depriving them of means of detecting them. Where there is no standard or measures, 'tis easy for men to falsify both; and no less easy is it to adulterate doctrines, where no recourse can be had to the primary rule. Now that there is a possibility that false teachers may arise, we have all assurance; nay, we have the word of Christ, and his Apostles that it should be so: and all Ecclesiastick Story to attest it has been so. And if in the first and purest times (those Ages of more immediate illumination) the *God of this world* found instruments whereby to *blind mens minds*, 2 Cor. 4. 4. it cannot be suppos'd impossible or improbable he should do so now.

The detention of these from the persons concern'd is sacrilegious invasion.

8. But to leave generals, and to speak to the case of that Church which magisterially prohibits Scripture to the vulgar: she manifestly stands liable to that charge of our Saviour, *Luke* 11. 52. *Ye have taken away the key of knowledge*: and by allowing the common people no more Scripture than what she affords them in their Sermons and private manuals, keeps it in her power to impose on them what she pleases. For 'tis sure those portions she selects for them, shall be none of those which clash with the doctrines she recommends: and when ever she will use this power to the corrupting their Faith, or worship (yea, or their manners either) they must brutishly submit to it, because they cannot bring their dictates to the test.

The magisterial detention of the Scriptures, falls under our Saviours doom of taking away the key of knowledge.

The plea of infallibility is no justification.

9. But 'twill be said, this danger she wards by her doctrine of infallibility: that is, she enervates a probable supposition attested by event, by an impossible one confuted by event. For 'tis certain that all particular Churches may err; and though the consciousness of that, forces the Roman Church upon the absurd pretence of universality, to assert her infallibility; yet alas *Tyber* may as well call it self the Ocean, or *Italy* the world, as the Roman Church may name it self the Universal; whilst 'tis so apparent that far the less part of Christians are under her Communion. And if she be but a particular Church, she has no immunity from errors, nor those under her from having those errors (how pernicious soever) impos'd upon them. As to her having actually err'd, and in divers particulars, the proof of that has been the work of so many Volumes, that 'twould be impertinent here to undertake it: I shall only instance in that of Image-worship, a practice perfectly irreconcileable with the second Commandment; and doubtless, clearly discern'd by her to be so: upon which account it is, that though by Translations and Paraphrases she wrests and moulds other Texts to comply with her Doctrines, yet she dares not trust to those arts for this: but takes a more compendious course, and expunges the Commandment; as is evident in her Catechisms and other Manuals. Now a Church that can thus sacrilegiously purloin one Commandment (and such a one as God has own'd himself the most zealously concern'd in) and to delude her children, split another to make up the number, may as her needs require, substract and divide what others she please: and then whilst all resort to Scripture is obstructed; how fatal a hazard must those poor souls run, who are oblig'd to follow these blind, or rather these winking Guides into the ditch?

The dangers of allowing the Scripture are no sufficient excuse.

10. But all these criminations she retorts by objecting the dangers of allowing the Scriptures to the vulgar, which she accuses as the spring of all Sects, Schisms, and Heresies. To which I answer first, that supposing this were true, 'twas certainly foreseen by God, who notwithstanding laid no restraint; probably as foreseeing, that the dangers of implicit faith (to which such a restraint must subject men) would be far greater: and if God saw fit to indulge the liberty, those that shall oppose it, must certainly think they do not only partake, but have transplanted infallibility from God to themselves.

'Tis not true that Schisms and Heresies are owing to the reading the Scripture.

11. But secondly, 'tis not generally true, that Sects, Schisms and Heresies are owing to this liberty: all Ecclesiastical Story shews us that they were not the illiterate Lay-men, but the learned Clerks who were usually the broachers of Heresies. And indeed many of them were so subtil and aerial, as could never been forg'd in grosser brains; but were founded not on Scripture meerly mistaken, but rackt and distorted with nice criticisms, and quirks of Logick, as several of the Ancients complain: some again sprang from that ambition of attaining, or impatience of missing Ecclesiastical dignities; which appropriates them to the Clergy. So that if the abuse infers a forfeiture of the use, the Learned have of all others the least title to the Scriptures; and perhaps those who now ingross them, the least title of all the Learned.

Church story informs us Heresies rose from Ecclesiasticks and men of speculation.

12. On the other side, Church story indeed mentions some Lay-propugners of Heresies; but those for the most part were either so gross and bestial, as disparag'd and confuted themselves and Authors, and rose rather from the brutish inclination of the men, than from their mistake of Scripture: or else they were by the immediate infusion of the Devil, who backt his heretical suggestions with sorceries and lying wonders, as in *Simon Magus*, *Menander*, *&c.* And for later times, though sometimes it happens among the vulgar a few pragmatick Spirits, that love to temper with the obscurest Texts, and will undertake to expound before they uuderstand; yet that is not their common temper: the generality are rather in the other extream, stupid and unobservant even of the plainest doctrines. And if to this be objected the multitude of Quakers and Fanaticks, who generally are of the ignorant sort; I answer, that 'tis manifest the first propugners of those tenets in *Germany* were not seduced into them by mistake of Scripture, but industriously form'd them, at once to disguise and promote their villanous designs of sedition and rapine: and as for those amongst us, it is not at all certain that their first errors were their own productions: there are vehement presumptions that the seeds were sown by greater Artificers; whose first business was to unhinge them from the Church, and then to fill their heads with strange Chimera's of their privileges and perfections; and by that intoxication of spiritual pride, dispose them for all delusions: and thereby render them, like *Sampson*'s Foxes, fit instruments to set all in combustion.

13. But

13. But admit this were but a conjecture, and that they were the sole Authors of their own frenzy; how appears it that the liberty of reading the Scripture was the cause of it? Had these men been of the Romish Communion, and so been interdicted private reading, yet some broken parts of Scripture would have been in Sermons and Books of devotion communicated to them; had it not been as possible for them to have wrested what they heard as what they read? In one respect it seems rather more likely: for in those loose and incidental quotations the connexion is sometimes not so discernable; and many Texts there are whose sense is so interwoven with the context, that without consulting that, there may be very pernicious mistakes: on which account it is probably more safe that the Auditor should have Bibles to consult. So that this restraint of Scripture is a very fallible expedient of the infallible Church. And indeed themselves have in event found it so; for if it were so soveraign a prophylactick against error, how comes it to pass that so many of their members that were under that discipline have revolted from them into that which they call heresy? If they say, the defection was made by some of the Learned to whom the Scripture was allow'd; why do they not (according to their way of arguing) take it from them also upon that experiment of its mischief, and confine it only to the infallible chair? but if they own them to have been unlearn'd (as probably the *Albigenses* and *Waldenses, &c.* were) they may see how insignificant a guard this restraint is against error: and learn how little is got by that policy which controls the Divine Wisdom.

It no way appears that the reading of Scripture was accessary to the rise or growth of heresies.

14. Nor can they take shelter in the example of the primitive Christians: for they in the constant use of the Holy Scriptures yielded not unto the Jews. Whereas the Jews had the Scriptures read publickly to them every Sabbath day; which *Josephus* against *Appion* thus expresses: *Moses propounded to the Jews the most excellent and necessary learning of the Law, not by hearing it once or twice, but every seventh day laying aside their works, he commanded them to assemble for the hearing of the Law, and throughly and exactly to learn it.* Parallel to this was the practice of the primitive Church, perform'd by the Lector or Reader, of which *Justin Martyr* in his 2 *Apol.* gives this account. *On the day called Sunday, all that abide in towns or the countries about, meet in one place, and the writings of the Apostles and Prophets are read, so far as there is place.* So *Tertullian* in this *Apol.* describing the offices in the publick Assemblies: *We feed our faith with the sacred Words, we raise our hopes, and establish our alliance.*

The primitive Church did not think fit to withhold the Scripture.

15. And as the Jews thought it indecent for persons professing piety, to let three days pass without the offices thereof in the congregation; and therefore met in their Synagogues upon every Tuesday and Thursday in the week. and there perform'd the duties of fasting, prayer, and hearing the Holy Scriptures; concerning which is the boast of the Pharisee, *Luke* 18. 12. in conformity hereto the Christians also, their Sabbath being brought forward from the Saturday to the day following; that the like number of days might not pass them without performing the aforesaid duties in the congregation; met together on the Wednesdays and Fridays, which were the days of Station, so frequently mention'd in *Tertullian* and others, the first writers of the Church. *Tertullian* expresly says, that the Christians dedicated to the offices of Piety, *the fourth and sixth day of the week*: and *Clemens Alex.* says of the Christians, that *they understood the secret reasons of their weekly fasts, to wit, those of the fourth day of the week, and that of the preparation before the Sabbath; commonly call'd Wednesday and Friday.* Where by the way, we may take notice what ground there is for the observation of the Wednesday and Friday in our Church, and the Litanys then appointed, so much neglected in this profligate Age.

The Jews never suffered three days to pass without the publick reading of the Law, which was imitated by the Christians.

16. But secondly, as the Jews were diligent in the private reading of the Scripture; being taught it from their infancy: which custom Saint *Paul* refers to 1 *Tim.* 3. 15. whereof *Josephus* against *Appion* says, *That if a man ask any Jew concerning the Laws, he will tell every thing readier than his name: for learning them from the first time they have sense of any thing they retain them imprinted in their minds.* So were the first Christians equally industrious in improving their knowledge of Divine Truth. *The whole life of a Christian,* says *Clem. Alex. Strom. l.* *is a holy solemnity, there his sacrifices are prayers and praises; before every meal he has the reading of the Holy Scriptures; and Psalms and Hymns at the time of his meals.* Which *Tertullian* also describes in his *Apol.* and Saint *Cyprian* in the end of the Epist. to *Donatus.*

They both privately instructed their children in it.

17. And this is farther evidenc'd by the early and numerous versions of the Scriptures into all vulgar Languages; concerning which *Theodoret* speaks in the book of the Cure of the affections of the Greeks, Serm. 5. *We Christians* (says he) *are enabled to*

A proof hereof are the early and numerous versions of the Scripture.

to shew the power of Apostolick and Prophetick doctrines, which have fill'd all Countries under Heaven. For that which was formerly utter'd in Hebrew, is not only translated into the Language of the Grecians, but also the Romans, Egyptians, Persians, Indians, Armenians, Scythians, Samaritans; and in a word into all the Languages that are us'd by any Nation. The same is said by Saint *Chrysostom* in his first Homily upon Saint *John*.

Which was done by the doctors of the Church.

18. Nor was this done by the blind zeal of inconsiderable men, but the most eminent Doctors of the Church were concern'd herein: such as *Origen*, who with infinite labour contriv'd the Hexapla. Saint *Chrysostom*, who translated the New Testament, Psalms, and some part of the Old Testament into the Armenian Tongue, as witnesses *Geor. Alex.* in the life of *Chrysostom*. So *Ulphilas* the first Bishop of the Goths translated the Holy Scripture into the Gothick; as *Socrat. Eccl. Hist. l.* 4. *cap.* 33. and others testify. Saint *Jerom*, who translated them not only into Latin from the Hebrew, the Old Italick version having been from the Greek; but also into his native vulgar Dalmatick: which he says himself in his Epistle to *Sophronius*.

The peoples having the Scripture for their private use, appears from the heathens extorting of them by presecution.

19. But the peoples having them for their private and constant use, appears farther by the Heathens making the extorting of them a part of their persecution: and when divers did faint in that trial, and basely surrender'd them, we find the Church level'd her severity only against the offending persons, did not (according to the Romish equity) punish the innocent, by depriving them of that sacred Book, because the others had so unworthily prostituted it (though the prevention of such a profanation for the future had been as fair a plea for it as the Romanists do now make:) but on the contrary the primitive Fathers are frequent, nay indeed importunate in their exhortations to the private study of Holy Scripture, which they recommend to Christians of all Ranks, Ages, and Sexes.

The suffrage of Clem. Alex.

20. As an instance hereof let us hear *Clemens* of *Alexand.* in his Exhortation. *The Word*, says he, *is not hid from any, it is a common light that shineth to all men; there is no obscurity in it; hear it you that be far off, and hear it you that are nigh.*

Of St. Jerom.

21. To this purpose Saint *Jerom* speaks in his Epistle to *Leta*, whom he directs in the education of her young daughter, and advises, *that instead of gems and silk, she be enamour'd with the Holy Scripture; wherein not gold, or skins, or Babylonian embroideries, but a correct and beautiful variety producing faith, will recommend its self. Let her first learn the Psalter, and be entertain'd with those songs; then be instructed unto life by the Proverbs of* Solomon: *let her learn from* Ecclesiastes *to despise worldly things; transcribe from* Job *the practice of patience and virtue: let her pass then to the Gospels, and never let them be out of her hands: and then imbibe with all the faculties of the mind, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, When she has enrich'd the store-house of the breast with these treasures, let her learn the Prophets, the Heptateuch, or books of* Moses, Joshua *and* Judges, *the books of* Kings, *and* Chronicles, *the Volumes of* Ezra *and* Esther; and lastly the *Canticles*. And indeed this Father is so concern'd to have the unletter'd female sex skilful in the Scriptures, that though he sharply rebukes their pride and over-weening; he not only frequently resolves their doubts concerning difficult places in the said Scriptures, but dedicates several of his Commentaries to them.

Of St. Austin.

22. The same is to be said of Saint *Austin*, who in his Epistles to unletter'd Laicks, encourages their enquiries concerning the Scripture, assuring *Volusianus* Eph. 3. *that it speaks those things that are plain to the heart of the learned and unlearned, as a familiar friend; in the mysterious, mounts not up into high phrases which might deter a slow and unlearned mind, (as the poor are in their addresses to the rich;) but invites all with lowly speech, feeding with manifest truth, and exercising with secret.* And Eph. 1. 21. tells the devout *Proba*, that *in this world, where we are absent from the Lord, and walk by faith not by sight, the soul is to think it self desolate, and never cease from prayer, and the words of Divine and Holy Scripture*, &c.

Of St. Chrysostom.

23. Saint *Chrysostom* in his third Homily of *Lazarus* thus addresses himself to *married persons, housholders, and people engag'd in trades and secular professions*; telling them, *that the reading of the Scripture is a great defensative against sin; and on the other side, the ignorance thereof is a deep and headlong precipice; that not to know the Law of God, is the utter loss of salvation; that this has caus'd heresies, and corruption of life, and has confounded the order of things: for it cannot be by any means, that his labour should be fruitless, who employes himself in a daily attentive reading of the Scripture.*

Farther testimonies from St. Chrysost.

24. *I am not*, says the same Saint *Chrysostom Homil.* 9. *on Colos.* 3. *a Monk, I have wife and children, and the cares of a family. But 'tis a destructive opinion, that the reading of the Scripture pertains only to those who have addicted themselves to a monastick life; when the reading of Scripture is much more necessary for secular persons: for they who converse abroad, and receive frequent wounds, are in greatest need of remedies and preservatives.*

tives. So *Hom.* 2. on *Matt.* *Hearken all you that are secular, how you ought to order your wives and children; and how you are particularly enjoyn'd to read the Scriptures, and that not perfunctorily or by chance, but very diligently.*

25. Likewise *Hom.* 3. on *Lazarus.* *What sayest thou, O man? it is not thy business to turn over the Scripture, being distracted by innumerable cares; no, thou hast therefore the greater obligation: others do not so much stand in need of the Scripture, as they who are conversant in much business.* Farther *Hom.* 8. on *Hebr.* 5. *I beseech you neglect not the reading of the Scriptures; but whether we comprehend the meaning of what is spoken or not, let us always be conversant in them: for daily meditation strengthens the memory; and it frequently happens, that what you now cannot find out, if you attempt it again, you will the next day discover: for God of his goodness will enlighten the mind.* It were endless to transcribe all the Exhortations of the ancient Doctors and Fathers of the Church; they not only permitted, but earnestly prest upon all Christans, whatever their estate or condition were, the constant reading of the Holy Scripture. Nor indeed was there restraint ever heard of till the Church of *Rome* had espous'd such doctrines as would not bear the test of Scripture: and then as those who deal in false wares are us'd to do, they found it necessary to proportion their lights accordingly.

Farther testimonies from St. Chrysost.

26. This *Peter Sutor* in his second Book chap. 22. of the Translation of the Scripture honestly confesses, saying, *That whereas many things are enjoyn'd which are not expresly in Scripture, the unlearn'd observing this, will be apt to murmur and complain that so many burthens are laid upon them, and their Christian liberty infring'd. They will easily be withdrawn from observing the Constitutions of the Church, when they find that they are not contain'd in the Law of Christ.* And that this was not a frivolous suggestion, the desperate attempt of the Romanists above mention'd, in leaving out the second Commandment in their Primers and Catechisms which they communicate to the people, may pass for an irrefragable evidence; for what Lay-man would not be shock'd, to find Almighty God command, *not to make any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; that no one should bow down to them, nor worship them*: when he sees the contrary is practic'd and commanded by the Church?

The confession of Pet. Sutor.

27. But would God none but the Romanist were impeachable of this detention of Scripture: there are too many among us that are thus false and envious to themselves: and what the former do upon policy and pretence of reverence, those do upon mere oscitancy and avow'd profaness; which are much worse inducements. And for such as these to declaim against detention of the Scripture, is like the Law-suits of those who contend only about such little punctilio's as themselves design no advantage from, but only the worsting their Adversaries: and it would be much safer for them to lie under the interdict of others, than thus to restrain themselves: even as much as the errors of obedience are more excusable than those of contempt and profaness.

The negligent who detain the Scripture from themselves are as criminal, as they who force them from their people.

28. And here I would have it seriously consider'd that the Edict of *Diocletian* for the demolishing the Christian Churches and the burning their Bibles, became the character and particular aggravation of his most bloody persecution. Now should Almighty God call us to the like trial, should Antichristian violence, whether heathen or other, take from us our Churches and our Bibles; what comfort could we have in that calamity, if our contempt of those blessings drove them from us; nay, prevented presecution, and bereft us of them even whilst we had them in our power? He who neglects to make his constant resort unto the Church, which by Gods mercy now stands open; or to read diligently the Holy Scriptures, which by the same Divine Goodness are free for him to use, is his own *Diocletian*; and without the terrors of death or torments, has renounc'd, if not the Faith, the great instruments of its conveyance, and pledge of God Almighties presence among the sons of men.

Such are Diocletians to themselves.

29. But what if men either upon the one motive or the other, will not read; yet the Scriptures continue still most worthy to be read: they retain still their propriety for all those excellent ends to which God design'd them: and as the Prophet tells the Jews, *Ezek.* 2. 5. *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, they shall know there has been a prophet among them*; so whether we will take the benefit or no, we shall one day find that the Holy Scriptures would have made us *wise unto Salvation.* If through our fault alone they fail to do so, they will one day assume a less grateful office; and from guides and assistants, become accusers and witnesses against us.

Whether we will bear or forbear, we shall be judg'd by the Scripture.

Sect. V.

The Scripture has great propriety and fitness towards the attainment of its excellent end.

The aptitude of the Scripture to attain its end.

1. WE are now in the next place to consider how exactly the Holy Scriptures are adapted to those great ends to which they are directed: how sufficient they are for that important negotiation on which they are sent: and that we shall certainly find them, if we look on them either intrinsecally, or circumstantially. For the first of these notions we need only to reflect on the third Part of this discourse, where the Scripture in respect of the Subject Matter is evinc'd to be a System of the most excellent Laws, back'd with the most transcendent rewards and punishments; and the certainty of those confirm'd by such pregnant instances of Gods mercies and vengeance in this world, as are the surest gages and earnests of what we are bid to expect in another.

It closes with our interests and passions.

2. Now what method imaginable can there be us'd to rational creatures of more force and energy? Nay it seems to descend even to our passions and accommodates it self to our several inclinations. And seeing how few Proselytes there are to bare and naked vertue, and how many to interest and advantage; God closes with them upon their own terms, and do's not so much enjoyn as buy those little services he asks from us.

And only affrights when we will not be allur'd.

3. But because some mens natures are so disingenuous as to hate to be oblig'd no less than to be reform'd, the Scripture has goads and scourges to drive such beasts as will not be led; terrors and threatnings, and those of most formidable sort to affright those who will not be allur'd. Nay lest incredulous men should question the reality of future rewards or punishments, the Scripture give as sensible evidence of them as we are capable of receiving in this world; by registring such signal protections and judgments proportion'd to vertue and vice, as sufficiently attest the Psalmists Axiom: *Doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth*, Psal. 58. 11. and leaves nothing to the impenitent sinner, but a *fearful expectation of that fiery indignation* threatned hereafter, *Heb.* 10. 27.

So justifies our Saviour's description of being a net, that caught of every sort.

4. And now methinks the Scripture seems to be that *net* our Saviour speaks of, *that caught of every sort*, Matt. 13. 47. it is of so vast a compass that it must, one would think, fetch in all kind of tempers: and sure had we not mixt natures with fiends, contracted some of their malice and obstinacy, meer human pravity could not hold out.

The authority wherewith the Scripture speaks gives great advantage to the attaining its end.

5. And as the Holy Scripture is thus fitly proportion'd to its end in respect of the Subject Matter, so it is also in reference to its circumstances, which all conspire to render it *the power of God unto salvation*, Rom. 1. 16. In the first rank of those we must place its Divine Original, which stamps it with an uncontrolable authority; and is an infallible security that the matter of it is perfectly true: since it proceeds from that essential verity which cannot abuse us with fraudulent promises or threatnings: and from that infinite power that cannot be impeded in the execution of what he purposes.

Which is sufficiently declar'd and promulgated.

6. Yet to render this cirumstance efficacious there needs another; to wit, that its being the Word of God be sufficiently testify'd to us: and we have in the foregoing Discourse evinc'd it to be so; and that in the utmost degree that a matter of that kind is capable of, beyond which no sober man will require evidence in any thing. And certainly these two circumstances thus united, have a mighty force to impress the dictates of Scripture on us. And we must rebel against God and our own convictions too to hold out against it.

It gives a history of all created beings from their first original.

7. A third circumstance relates to the frame and composure of this Divine Book, both as to method, and stile: concerning which I have already made some reflections. But now that I may speak more distinctly, I observe it takes its rise from the first point of time wherein 'twas possible for mankind to be concern'd; and gradually proceeds to its fall and renovation: shews us first our need of a Redeemer, and then points us out who it is by Types and promises in the Old Testament, and by way of history and completion in the New. In the former it acquaints us with that pedagogy of the Law which God design'd as our *School-master to bring us to Christ*, Gal. 3. 25. and in the Gospel shews us yet a more excellent way; presents

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us with those more sublime elevated doctrines, which Christ came down from heaven to reveal.

8. As for the stile, that is full of grateful variety, sometimes high and majestick, as becomes that *high and holy one that inhabiteth eternity*, Isai. 57. 15. and sometimes so humble and after the manner of men, as agrees to the other part of his character, *his dwelling is with him that is of an humble spirit*, Isai. 57. 15. I know profane wits are apt to brand this as an unevenness of stile: but they may as well accuse the various notes of Musick as destructive to Harmony, or blame an Orator being able to tune his tongue to the most different strains.

The stile is frequently full of majesty.

9. Another excellency of the stile, is its Propriety to the several subjects it treats of. When it speaks of such things as God would not have men pry into, it wraps them up in clouds and thick darkness; by that means to deter inquisitive man (as he did at *Sinai*) from breaking into the mount, *Exod.* 20. And that he gives any intimation at all of such, seems design'd only to give us a just estimate how shallow our apprehensions are; and excite us to adore and admire that Abyss of Divine Wisdom which we can never fathom.

Suited to its subject; is plain in duty, and involv'd in mysteries.

10. Things of a middle nature, which may be useful to some, but are not indispensably necessary to all, the Scriptures leaves more accessible, yet not so obvious as to be within every mans reach: but makes them only the prize of industry, prayer, and humble endeavours. And it is no small benefit that those who covet the knowledge of Divine Truth, are by it engag'd to take these vertues in the way. Besides there is so much time requir'd to that study, as renders it inconsistent with those secular businesses wherein the generality of men are immerst: and consequently 'tis necessary that those who addict themselves to the one, have competent vacancy from the other: And in this it has a visible use by being very contributive to the maintaining that spiritual subordination of the people to the Pastors, which God has establish'd. *Miriam* and *Corah's* Partisans are a pregnant instance how much the opinion of equal knowledge unfits for subjection: and we see by sad experience how much the bare pretence of it has disturb'd the Church, and made those turn preachers who never were understanding hearers.

Things of a middle nature, are made the prize of industry.

11. But besides these more abstruse, there are easier truths in which every man is concern'd; the explicit knowledge whereof is necessary to all: I mean the Divine rules for saving Faith and Manners. And in those the Scripture stile is as plain as is possible: condescends to the apprehensions of the rudest capacities: so that none that can read the Scripture but will there find the way to bliss evidently chalk'd out to him. That I may use the words of Saint *Gregory*, *the Lamb may wade in those waters of life, as well as the Elephant may swim. The Holy Ghost,* as Saint *Austin* tells us, Lib. 2. of the Christian doctrine, chap. 6. *has made in the plainer places of Scripture magnificent and healthful provision for our hunger; and in the obscure, against satiety. For there are scarce any things drawn from obscure places, which in others are not spoken most plainly.* And he farther adds, *that if any thing happen to be no where explain'd, every man may there abound in his own sense.*

Difficult places are interpreted by plainer.

12. So again in the same Book, chap. 2. he says, *that all those things which concern Faith and Manners, are plainly to be met with in the Scripture*: and Saint *Jerom* in his Comment on *Isai.* 19. tells us, *that 'tis the custom of the Scripture to close obscure sayings with those that are easy; and what was first exprest darkly, to propose in evident words*: which very thing is said likewise by Saint *Chrysostom*, *Hom.* 9. on 2 *Cor.* 4. 11. who in his first *Homily* on Saint *Matt.* farther declares, *that the Scriptures are easy to be understood, and expos'd to vulgar capacities.*

St. Austin and St. Jerom and St. Chrysostom attest the easiness of the Scripture.

13. He says again, *Hom.* upon *Isaiah*, *that the Scriptures are not mettals that require the help of Miners, but afford a treasure easily to be had to them that seek the riches contain'd in them. It is enough only to stoop down, and look upon them, and depart replenish'd with wealth; it is enough only to open them, and behold the splendour of those Gems.* Again, *Hom.* 3. on the second Epist. to the *Thess.* 2. *All things are evident and straight, which are in the Holy Scripture, whatever is necessary is manifest.* So also *Hom.* 3. on *Gen.* 14. *It cannot be that he who is studious in the Holy Scripture should be rejected: for though the instruction of men be wanting, the Lord from above will inlighten our minds, shine in upon our reason, reveal what is secret, and teach what we do not know.* So *Hom.* 1. on *John* 11. *Almighty God involves his doctrine with no mists and darkness, as did the Philosophers: his doctrine is brighter than the Sun-beams, and more illustrious; and therefore every where diffus'd.* And *Hom.* 6. on *John* 11. *His doctrine is so facile, that not only the wise, but even women, and youths must comprehend it. Hom.* 13. on *Gen.* 2. *Let us go to the Scripture as our Mark, which is its own interpreter.* And soon after he says, that *the Scri-*

Especially in things necessary.

pture interprets it self, and suffers not its Auditor to err. To the same purpose says *Cyril* in his third Book against *Julian.* *In the Scripture nothing is difficult to them, who are conversant in them as they ought to be.*

'Tis a groundless cavil that men make to the obscurity of Scripture, since whatever is difficult is not necessary.

14. It is therefore a groundless cavil which men make at the obscurity of the Scripture; since it is not obscure in those things wherein 'tis our common interest it should be plain: which sufficiently justifies its propriety to that great end of *making us wise unto salvation.* And for those things which seem less intelligible to us, many of them become so, not by the innate obscurity of the Text, but by extrinsick circumstances (of which perhaps the over-busy tampering of Paraphrasts, pleased with new notions of their own, may be reckon'd for one.) But this subject the Reader may find so well proposed in Mr. *Boyls* Tract concerning the stile of Scripture, that I shall be kindest both to him and it to refer him thither; as also for answer to those other querulous objections which men galled with the sense of the Scripture, have made to its stile.

A farther advantage for the attainment of the end design'd in the Scripture is its being committed to writing.

15. A third circumstance in which the Scripture is fitted to attain its end, is its being committed to Writing, as that is distinguish'd from Oral delivery. It is most true, the word of God is of equal authority and efficacy which way soever it be deliver'd. The Sermons of the Apostles were every jot as Divine and powerful out of their mouths, as they are now in their story. All the advantage thereof that the written Word can pretend to, is in order to its perpetuity, as it is a securer way of derivation to posterity, than that of oral Tradition. To evince that it is so, I shall first weigh the rational probabilities on either side, Secondly, I shall consider to which God himself appears in Scripture to give the deference.

Especially being universally dispers'd.

16. For the first of these, I shall propose this consideration, which I had occasion to intimate before, that the Bible being writ for the universal use of the faithful, 'twas as universally disperst amongst them: The Jews had the Law not only in their Synagogues, but in their private houses, and as soon as the Evangelical Books were writ, they were scatter'd into all places where the Christian Faith had obtain'd. Now when there was such a vast multitude of copies, and those so revered by the possessors, that they thought it the highest pitch of sacrilege to expose them, it must surely be next to impossible, entirely to suppress that Book. Besides, it could never be attempted but by some eminent violence, as it was by the heathen Persecutors; which (according to the common effect of opposition) serv'd to enhance the Christians value of the Bible; and consequently when the storm was past, to excite their diligence for recruiting the number. So that, unless in after Ages, all the Christians in the world should at once make a voluntary defection, and conspire to eradicate their Religion, the Scriptures could not be utterly extinguish'd.

Whereby as it was secur'd from a total suppression, so also from falsification.

17. And that which secures it from total suppression, do's in a great degree do so from corruption and falsification. For whilst so many genuine copies are extant in all parts of the world, to be appeal'd to, it would be a very difficult matter to impose a spurious one; especially if the change were so material as to awaken mens jealousies. And it must be only in a place and age of gross ignorance, that they can be daring enough to attempt it. And if it should happen to succeed in such a particular Church; yet what is that to the universal? And to think to have the forgery admitted there, is (as a learned man says) like attempting to poison the sea.

Tadition is much more liable to hazards.

18. On the other side, oral Tradition seems more liable to hazards, error may there insinuate it self much more insensibly. And though there be no universal conspiracy to admit it at first; yet like a small eruption of waters, it widens its own passage, till it causes an inundation. There is no impression so deep, but time and intervening accidents may wear out of mens minds; especially where the notions are many and are founded not in nature, but positive institution, as a great part of Christian Religion is. And when we consider the various tempers of men, 'twill not be strange that succeeding Ages will not always be determin'd by the Traditions of the former. Some are pragmatick, and think themselves fitter to prescribe to the belief of their posterity, than to follow that of their Ancestors: some have interests and designs which will be better serv'd by new Tenets: and some are ignorant and mistaking, and may unawares corrupt the doctrine they should barely deliver: and of this last sort we may guess there may be many, since it falls commonly to the mothers lot to imbue children with the first rudiments.

We daily see how a true and probable story after a little telling 'em roves into improbable lie

19. Now in all these cases how possible is it that primitive Tradition may be either lost or adulterated? and consequently, and in proportion to that possibility, our confidence of it must be stagger'd. I am sure according to the common estimate in seculars it must be so. For I appeal to any man whether he be not apter

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to credit a relation which comes from an eye-witness than at the third or fourth, much more at the hundredth rebound: (as in this case.) And daily experience tells us; that a true and probable story by passing through many hands, often grows to an improbable lie. This man thinks he could add one becoming circumstance, that man another: and whilst most men take the liberty to do so, the relation grows as monstrous as such a heap of incoherent fancies can make it.

20. If to this it be said, that this happens only in trivial secular matters, but in the weighty concern of Religion, mankind is certainly more serious and sincere. I answer that it is very improbable, since 'tis obvious in the common practice of the world, that the interests of Religion are postpon'd to every little wordly concern. And therefore when a temporal advantage requires the bending and warping of Religion, there never be wanting some that will attempt it. *The weighty concern of religion cannot remedy this.*

21. Besides, there is still left in human nature so much of the venom of the Serpents first temptation, that though men cannot be as God, yet they love to be prescribing to him, and to be their own Assessors as to that worship and homage they are to pay him. *We are naturally enclin'd to will-worship.*

22. But above all 'tis considerable that in this case Satan has a more peculiar concern, and can serve himself more by a falsification here than in temporal affairs. For if he can but corrupt Religion, it ceases to be his enemy, and becomes one of his most useful engins, as sufficiently appear'd in the rites of the heathen worship. We have therefore no cause to think this an exempt case: but to presume it may be influenc'd by the same pravity of human nature, which prevails in others; and consequently are oblig'd to bless God that he has not left our spiritual concerns to such hazards, but has lodg'd them in a more secure repository, the written word. *And the devil is concern'd to help this temper forward and corrupt religion.*

23. But I foresee 'twill be objected, that whilst I thus disparage Tradition, I do vertually invalidate the Scripture it self, which comes to us upon its credit. To this I answer, that since God has withdrawn immediate revelation from the world, Tradition is the only means to convey to us the first notice that this Book is the word of God: and it being the only means he affords, we have all reason to depend on his goodness, that he will not suffer that to be evacuated to us: and that how liable soever Tradition may be to err, yet that shall not actually err in this particular. *It may be objected, that by decrying Tradition we invalidate the authority of the Scripture.*

24. But in the second place; This Tradition seems not so liable to falsification as others: It is so very short and simple a proposition; such and such writings are the word of God, that there is no great room for sophistry or mistake to pervert the sense; the only possible deception must be to change the subject, and obtrude supposititious writings in room of the true, under the title of the word of God. But this has already appear'd to be unpracticable, because of the multitude of copies which were disperst in the world; by which such an attempt would soon have been detected. There appears therefore more reason as well as more necessity, to rely upon Tradition in this, than in most other particulars. *The Tradition which concerns the author or credit of a book is a short proposition which is not apt to be corrupted.*

25. Neither yet do I so far decry oral Tradition in any, as to conclude it impossible it should derive any truth to posterity; I only look on it as more casual; and consequently a less fit conveyance of the most important and necessary verities than the written word: In which I conceive my self justify'd by the common sense of mankind; who use to commit those things to writing, which they are most solicitous to derive to posterity. Do's any Nation trust their fundamental Laws only to the memory of the present Age, and take no other course to transmit them to the future? do's any man purchase an estate, and leave no way for his children to lay claim to it, but the Tradition the present witnesses shall leave of it? Nay do's any considering man ordinarily make any important pact or bargain (though without relation to posterity) without putting the Articles in writing? And whence is all this caution but from an universal consent that writings is the surest way of transmitting? *The judgment of mankind gives the preference to writing against Tradition. Our laws and Evidences of our Estates, we do not trust to memory.*

26. But we have yet a higher appeal in this matter than to the suffrage of men: God himself seems to have determin'd it; And what his decision is, 'tis our next business to enquire. *But herein we have the suffrage of God himself.*

27. And first he has given the most real and comprehensive attestation to this way of writing, by having himself chosen it. For he is too wise to be mistaken in his estimate of better and worse, and too kind to chuse the worst for us: and yet he has chosen to communicate himself to the latter Ages of the world by writing; and has summ'd up all the Eternal concerns of mankind in the sacred Scriptures, and left those sacred Records by which we are to be both inform'd and govern'd; which if oral Tradition would infallibly have done, had been utterly needless: and *He having chose.*

God sure is not so prodigal of his Spirit, as to inspire the Authors of Scripture to write that, whose use was superseded by a former more certain expedient.

Himself wrote the Decalogue.

28. Nay, under the Mosaick œconomy, when he made use of other ways of revealing himself, yet to perpetuate the memory even of those Revelations, he chose to have them written. At the delivery of the Law, God spake then *viva voce*, and with that pomp of dreadful solemnity, as certainly was apt to make the deepest impressions; yet God foresaw that through every succeeding Age that stamp would grow more dim, and in a long revolution might at last be extinct. And therefore how warm soever the Israelites apprehensions then were, he would not trust to them for the perpetuating his Law, but committed it to writing, *Exod.* 31. 18. nay wrote it twice himself.

Even the ceremonial Law, which was to be in daily practice was written by Moses. And the restitutions of Religion in that nation, were by the book of the Law found and read; not by dormant Tradition.

29. Yet farther even the ceremonial Law, though not intended to be of perpetual obligation, was not yet referr'd to the traditionary way, but was wrote by *Moses*, and deposited with the Priests, *Deut.* 31. 9. And after-event shew'd this was no needless caution. For when under *Manasses*, Idolatry had prevail'd in *Jerusalem*, it was not by any dormant Tradition, but by the Book of the Law found in the Temple, that *Josiah* was both excited to reform Religion, and instructed how to do it, 2 *Kings* 22. 10. And had not that or some other copy been produc'd, they had been much in the dark as to the particulars of their reformation; which that they had not been convey'd by Tradition, appears by the sudden startling of the King upon the reading of the Law; which could not have been, had he been before possest with the contents of it. In like manner we find in *Nehemiah*, that the observation of the Feast of Tabernacles was recover'd by consulting the Law; the Tradition whereof was wholly worn out; or else it had sure been impossible that it could for so long a time have been intermitted, *Neh.* 8. 18. And yet mens memories are commonly more retentive of an external visible Rite, than they are of speculative Propositions, or moral Precepts.

Hither God directs all appeals, to the Law and to the Testament.

30. These instances shew how fallible an expedient meer oral Tradition is for transmission to posterity. But admit no such instance could be given, 'tis argument enough that God has by his own choice of writing, given the preference to it. Nor has he barely chosen it, but has made it the standard by which to measure all succeeding pretences. 'Tis the means he prescribes for distinguishing Divine from diabolical Inspirations: *To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, there is no light in them,* Isai. 8. 20. And when the Lawyer interrogated our Saviour what should we do to inherit eternal life, he sends him not to ransack Tradition, or the cabalistical Divinity of the Rabbins, but refers him to the Law: *What is written in the Law? How readest thou?* Luke 10. 26. And indeed, throughout the Gospel, we still find him in his discourse appealing to Scripture, and asserting its authority: as on the other side inveighing against those Traditions of the Elders which had evacuated the written Word: *Ye make the Word of God of none effect by your Tradition,* Matt. 15. 6. Which as it abundantly shews Christ's adherence to the written Word, so 'tis a pregnant instance how possible it is for Tradition to be corrupted, and made the instrument of imposing mens fancies even in contradiction to God's commands.

And our Lord shews that Tradition did evacuate and not preserve the Law.

31. And since our blessed Lord has made Scripture the test whereby to try Traditions, we may surely acquiesce in his decision, and either embrace or reject Traditions, according as they correspond to the supream rule, the written Word. It must therefore be a very unwarrantable attempt to set up Tradition in competition with (much more in contradiction to) that to which Christ himself hath subjected it.

Saint Paul reckons it as a peculiar privilege of the Jewish Church, that the Oracles of God were committed to them.

32. Saint *Paul* reckons it as the principal privilege of the Jewish Church, that it had the Oracles of God committed to it, *i. e.* that the Holy Scriptures were deposited, and put in its custody: and in this the Christian Church succeeds it, and is the guardian and conservator of Holy Writ. I ask then, had the Jewish Church by vertue of its being keeper, a power to supersede any part of those Oracles intrusted to them? If so, Saint *Paul* was much out in his estimate, and ought to have reckon'd that as their highest privilege. But indeed, the very nature of the trust implies the contrary; and besides, 'tis evident, that is the very crime Christ charges upon the Jews in the place above cited. And if the Jewish Church had no such right, upon what account can the Christian claim any? Has Christ enlarg'd its Charter? Has he left the sacred Scripture with her, not to preserve and practise, but to regulate and reform? To fill up its vacancies, and supply its defects by her own Traditions? If so, let the commission be produc'd; but if her office be only that of guardianship

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and trust, she must neither substract from, nor by any superadditions of her own evacuate its meaning and efficacy: and to do so, would be the same guilt that it would be in a person intrusted with the fundamental Records of a Nation, to foist in such clauses as himself pleases.

33. In short, God has in the Scriptures laid down exact rules for our belief and practice, and has entrusted the Church to convey them to us: if she vary, or any way enervate them, she is false to that trust, but cannot by it oblige us to recede from that rule she should deliver, to comply with that she obtrudes upon us. The case may be illustrated by an easy resemblance. Suppose a King hath a foreign Principality for which he composes a body of Laws; annexes to them rewards and penalties, and requires an exact and indispensable conformity to them. Those being put in writing, he sends by a select messenger: now suppose this messenger deliver them, yet says withal, that himself has authority from the King to supersede these Laws at his pleasure; so that their last resort must be to his dictates, yet produces no other testimony but his own bare affirmation. Is it possible that any men in their wits should be so stupidly credulous, as to incur the penalty of those Laws upon so improbable an indemnity? And sure it would be no whit less madness in Christians, to violate any precept of God, on an ungrounded supposal of the Churches power to dispense with them.

The power of the Church is to keep and explain, not evacuate the written Word.

34. And if the Church universal hath not this power, nor indeed ever claim'd it, it must be a strange insolence for any particular Church to pretend to it, as the Church of *Rome* do's; as if we should owe to her Tradition all our Scripture, and all our Faith; insomuch that without the supplies which she affords from the Oracle of her Chair, our Religion were imperfect, and our salvation insecure. Upon which wild dictates I shall take liberty in a distinct Section, farther to animadvert.

If the universal Church hath not power over the written Word, much less hath a particular Church.

Sect. VI.

The Suffrage of the primitive Christian Church, concerning the propriety and fitness which the Scripture has towards the attainment of its excellent end.

1. AGAINST what has been hitherto said to the advantage of the Holy Scripture, there opposes it self (as we have already intimated) the Authority of the Church of *Rome*; which allows it to be only an imperfect rule of Faith, saying in the fourth Session of the Council of *Trent*, that *Christian faith and discipline, are contain'd in the Books written, and unwritten Tradition.* And in the fourth rule of the Index put forth by command of the said Council, *the Scripture* is declar'd to be *so far from useful, that its reading is pernicious, if permitted promiscuously in the vulgar Tongue*, and therefore to be with-held: insomuch that the study of the Holy Bible is commonly by persons of the *Roman* Communion, imputed to Protestants as part of their heresy; they being call'd by them in contempt the Evangelical men, and Scripturarians. And the Bible in the vulgar Tongue of any Nation, is commonly reckon'd among prohibited Books, and as such, publickly burnt when met with by the Inquisitors: and the person who is found with it, or to read therein, is subjected to severe penalties.

The Scripture is sufficient to attain its end without the supplement of Tradition.

2. For the vindication of the truth of God, and to put to shame those unhappy Innovators, who amidst great pretences to Antiquity, and veneration to the Scriptures, prevaricate from both: I think it may not be amiss to shew plainly the mind of the primitive Church herein; and that in as few words as the matter will admit.

The Judgment of the Primitive Church therein.

3. First I premise that *Irenæus* and *Tertullian* having to do with Hereticks, who boasted themselves to be emendators of the Apostles, and wiser than they, despising their authority, rejecting several parts of the Scripture, and obtruding other writings in their stead, have had recourse unto Tradition, with a seeming preference of it unto Scripture. Their adversaries having no common principle besides the owning the name of Christians; it was impossible to convince them, but by a recourse to such a *medium* which they would allow. But these Fathers being to set

The particular circumstance of Irenæus and Tertullian.

down and establish their Faith, are most express in resolving it into Scripture: and when they recommend Tradition, ever mean such as is also Apostolical.

The Judgment of Ireneus. 4. *Ireneus* in the second Book, chap. 37. tells us, *that the Scriptures are perfect, as dictated by the word of God and his Spirit.* And the same Father begins his third Book in this manner, *The disposition of our salvation is no otherwise known by us, than by those by whom the Gospel was brought to us; which indeed they first preach'd, but afterward deliver'd it to us in the Scripture, to be the foundation and pillar of our Faith. Nor may we imagine, that they began to preach to others, before they themselves had perfect knowledge, as some are bold to say; boasting themselves to be emendators of the Apostles. For after our Lords Resurrection, they were endued with the power of the holy Spirit from on high; and having perfect knowledge, went forth to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of salvation, and celestial praise unto men. Each and all of whom had the Gospel of God. So Saint* Matthew *wrote the Gospel to the* Hebrews, *in their tongue, Saint* Peter *and Saint* Paul *preach'd at* Rome, *and there founded a Church:* Mark *the Disciple and interpreter of* Peter, *deliver'd in writing what he had preach'd, and* Luke *the follower of* Paul *set down in his Book the Gospel he had deliver'd. Afterward Saint* John *at* Ephesus *in* Asia *publish'd his Gospel, &c.* In his fourth Book, chap. 66. he directs all the Hereticks with whom he deals, to *read diligently the Gospel deliver'd by the Apostles, and also read diligently the Prophets,* assuring *they shall there find every action, every doctrine, and every suffering of our Lord declared by them.*

Of Tertullian 5. Thus *Tertullian* in his Book of Prescriptions, chap. 6. *It is not lawful for us to introduce any thing of our own will, nor make any choice upon our arbitrement. We have the Apostles of our Lord for our Authors, who themselves took up nothing of their own will or choice; but faithfully imparted to the Nations the Discipline which they had receiv'd from Christ. So that if an Angel from heaven should teach another doctrine, he were to be accurst.* And chap. 25. *'Tis madness,* says he of the Hereticks, *when they confess that the Apostles were ignorant of nothing, nor taught things different; to think that they did not reveal all things to all:* which he inforces in the following Chapter. In his Book against *Hermogenes,* chap. 23. he discourses thus; *I adore the plenitude of the Scripture, which discovers to me the Creator, and what was creation. Also in the Gospel I find the Word was the Arbiter and Agent in the Creation. That all things were made of pre-existent matter I never read. Let* Hermogenes, *and his journy-men shew that it is written. If it be not written, let him fear the woe, which belongs to them that add or detract.* And in the 39. chap. of his Prescriptions. *We feed our faith, raise our hope, and establish our reliance with the sacred Words.*

Of Hippolytus. 6. In like manner *Hippolytus* in the *Homily* against *Noetus* declares, that *we acknowledge only from Scripture that there is one God. And whereas secular Philosophy is not to be had, but from the reading of the doctrine of the Philosophers; so whosoever of us will preserve piety towards God, he cannot otherwise learn it than from the Holy Scripture.* Accordingly *Origen* in the fifth *Homily* on *Leviticus,* says that *in the Scripture every word appertaining to God, is to be sought and discust; and the knowledge of all things is to be receiv'd.*

Of Saint Cyprian. 7. What Saint *Cyprian*'s opinion was in this point, we learn at large from his Epistle to *Pompey.* For when Tradition was objected to him, he answers; *Whence is this Tradition? is it from the authority of our Lord and his Gospel; or comes it from the commands of the Apostles in their Epistles? Almighty God declares that what is written should be obey'd and practic'd. The Book of the Law, says he in* Joshua, *shall not depart from thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate in it day and night, that you may observe and keep all that is written therein. So our Lord sending his Apostles, commands them to baptize all Nations, and teach them to observe all things that he had commanded.* Again, *What obstinacy and presumption is it to prefer human Tradition to divine command; not considering that Gods wrath is kindled as often as his Precepts are dissolv'd and neglected by reason of human Traditions? Thus God warns and speaks by* Isaiah: *this people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; but in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Also the Lord in the Gospel checks and reproves, saying, you reject the Law of God, that you may establish your Tradition. Of which Precept the Apostle Saint* Paul *being mindful admonishes and instructs, saying: If any man teaches otherwise, and hearkens not to sound doctrine, and the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is proud, knowing nothing: from such we must depart.* And again he adds, *There is a compendious way for religious and sincere minds, both to deposit their errors, and find out the truth. For if we return to the source and original of divine tradition, human error will cease, and the ground of heavenly mysteries being seen, whatsoever was hid with clouds and darkness, will be manifest by the light of truth. If a pipe that brought plentiful supplies of water, fail on*

the suddain, do not men look to the fountain and thence learn the cause of the defect, whether the spring it self be dry; or if running freely, the water is stopt in its passage; that if by interrupted or broken conveyances, it was hindred to pass, they being repair'd, it may again be brought to the City, with the same plenty as it flows from the spring? And this Gods Priests ought to do at this time, obeying the commands of God, that if truth have swerv'd or fail'd in any particular, we go backward to the source of the Evangelical and Apostolical Tradition, and there found our actings, from whence their order and origination began.

8. It is true *Bellarmine* reproaches this discourse as erroneous; but whatever it might be in the inference which Saint *Cyprian* drew from it, in it self it was not so. For Saint *Austin*, though sufficiently ingag'd against Saint *Cyprian*'s conclusion, allows the position as most Orthodox; saying in the fourth Book of Baptism, chap. 35. *Whereas he admonishes to go back to the fountain, that is, the Tradition of the Apostles, and thence bring the stream down to our times; 'tis most excellent, and without doubt to be done.*

Bellarmines exception shew'd to be vain by the Authority of Saint Austin.

9. Thus *Eusebius* expresses himself in his second Book against *Sabellius*, *As it is a point of sloth, not to seek into those things, whereof one may enquire; so 'tis insolence to be inquisitive in others. But what are those things which we ought to enquire into? Even those which are to be found in the Scriptures: those things which are not there to be found, let us not seek after. For if they ought to be known, the Holy Ghost had not omitted them in the Scripture.*

The judgment of Eusebius.

10. *Athanasius* in his Tract of the Incarnation, says, *It is fit for us to adhere to the Word of God, and not relinquish it, thinking by syllogisms to evade what is there clearly deliver'd.* Again in his Tract to *Serap.* of the Holy Ghost: *Ask not*, says he, *concerning the Trinity, but learn only from the Scriptures. For the instructions, which you will find there, are sufficient.* And in his Oration against the Gentiles, declares, *That the Scriptures are sufficient to the manifestation of the Truth.*

Of Athanasius.

11. Agreeable to these is *Optatus* in his fifth Book against *Parmen*, who reasons thus: *You say 'tis lawful to rebaptize, we say 'tis not lawful: betwixt your saying and our gainsaying the peoples minds are amus'd. Let no man believe either you or us. All men are apt to be contentious. Therefore judges are to be call'd in. Christians they cannot be; for they will be parties, and thereby partial. Therefore a Judge is to be look'd out from abroad. If a Pagan, he knows not the mysteries of our Religion. If a Jew, he is an enemy to our baptism. There is therefore no earthly Judge; but one is to be sought from heaven. Yet there is no need of a resort to heaven, when we have in the Gospel a Testament. And in this case, celestial things may be compar'd to earthly. So it is as with a father who has many children; while he is present he orders them all, and there is no need of a written Will: accordingly Christ when he was present upon earth, from time to time commanded the Apostles whatsoever was necessary. But as the earthly father finding himself to be at the point of death, and fearing that after his departure his children should quarrel among themselves, he calls witnesses, and puts his mind in writing; and if any difference arise among the brethren, they go not to their fathers Sepulcher, but repair to his Will and Testament; and he who rests in his grave, speaks still in his writing, as if he were alive. Our Lord who left his Will among us, is now in heaven, therefore let us seek his Commands in the Gospel, as in his Will.*

Of Optatus.

12. Thus *Cyril* of *Jerusalem* Cat. 4. *Nothing no not the least concernment of the Divine and Holy Sacraments of our Faith, is to be deliver'd without the Holy Scripture: believe not me unless I give you a demonstration of what I say from the Scripture.*

Of Cyril of Jerusalem.

13. Saint *Basil* in his Book of the true Faith says, *If God be faithful in all his sayings, his words and works, they remaining for ever, and being done in truth and equity; it must be an evident sign of infidelity and pride, if any one shall reject what is written, and introduce what is not written.* In which Books he generally declares that he will write nothing but what he receives from the Holy Scripture: and that he abhorr's from taking it elsewhere. In his 29. *Homily* against the *Antitrinitarians. Believe*, says he, *those which are written; seek not those which are not written.* And in his Eth. reg. 26. *Every word and action ought to be confirm'd by the Testimony of the divinely inspir'd Scriptures to the establishment of the Faith of the good, and reproof of the wicked.*

Of Saint Basil.

14. Saint *Ambrose* in the first Book of his Offic. says: *How can we make use of any thing which is not to be found in the Scripture?* And in his Institut. of Virgins. *I read he is the first, but read not he is the second; let them who say he is the second, shew it from the reading.*

Of Saint Ambrose.

15. Greg. *Nissen* in his Dial. of the Soul and Resurrection, says, *'Tis undeniable, that truth is there only to be plac'd, where there is the seal of Scripture Testimony.*

Of Gregor. Nissen.

Of Saint Jerom. 19. Saint *Jerom* against *Helvidius* declares, *As we deny not that which is written, so we refuse those which are not written.* And in his Comment on the 98. *Psal. Every thing that we assert, we must shew from the Holy Scripture. The word of him that speaks has not this authority as Gods precept.* And on the 87. *Psal. Whatever is said after the Apostles, let it be cut off, nor have afterwards authority. Though one be holy after the Apostles, though one be eloquent; yet has he not authority.*

Of Saint Austin. 17. Saint *Austin* in his Tract of the unity of the Church, chap. 12. *acknowledges that he could not be convinc'd but by the Scriptures of what he was to believe; and adds they are read with such manifestation, that he who believes them must confess the doctrine to be most true.* In the second Book of Christian doctrine, chap. 9. he says, that *in the plain places of Scripture are found all those things that concern Faith and Manners.* And in Epist. 4. 42. *All things which have been exhibited heretofore as done to mankind, and what we now see and deliver to our posterity, the Scripture has not past them in silence, so far forth as they concern the search or defence of our Religion.* In his Tract of the good of Widowhood, he says to *Julian*, the person to whom he addresses: *What shall I teach you more than that we read in the Apostle: for the Holy Scripture settles the rule of our doctrine; that we think not any thing more than we ought to think; but to think soberly, as God has dealt to every man the measure of Faith. Therefore my teaching is only to expound the words of this Doctor,* Epist. 157. *Where any subject is obscure, and passes our comprehension, and the Scripture do's not plainly afford its help, there human conjecture is presumptuous in defining.*

Of Theophilus Alex. 18. *Theophilus* of *Alex.* in his second Paschal *Homily*, tells us, that *'tis the suggestion of a diabolical spirit to think that any thing besides the Scripture has divine authority.* And in his third he adds, that *the Doctors of the Church having the Testimony of the Scripture, lay firm foundation of their doctrine.*

Of St. Chrysostom. 19. *Chrysostom* in his third *Homily* on the first of the *Thessalonians*, asserts, that *from the alone reading or hearing of the Scripture one may learn all things necessary.* So *Hom.* 34. on *Acts* 15. he declares. *A heathen comes and says: I would willingly be a Christian, but I know not who to joyn my self to; for there are many contentions among you, many seditions and tumults; so that I am in doubt what opinion I should chuse. Each man says, what I say is true, and I know not whom to believe; each pretends to Scripture which I am ignorant of. 'Tis very well the issue is put here: for if the appeal were to reason, in this case there would be just occasion of being troubled: but when we appeal to Scripture, and they are simple and certain, you may easily your self judge. He that agrees with the Scripture is a Christian, he that resists them, is far out of the way.* And on *Psal.* 95. *If any thing be said without the Scripture, the mind halts between different opinions; sometimes inclining as to what is probable, anon rejecting as what is frivolous: but when the testimony of Holy Scripture is produc'd, the mind both of speaker and hearer is confirm'd.* And *Hom.* 4. on *Lazar. Though one should rise from the dead, or an Angel come down from heaven, we must believe the Scripture; they being fram'd by the Lord of Angels, the quick and the dead.* And *Hom.* 13. on the 2 *Cor.* 7. *Is it not an absurd thing that when we deal with men about money, we will trust no body, but cast up the sum, and make use of our counters; but in religious affairs suffer our selves to be led aside by other mens opinions, even then when we have by an exact scale and touch stone, the dictate of the Divine Law. Therefore I pray and exhort you, that giving no heed to what this or that man says, you would consult the Holy Scripture, and thence learn the Divine riches, and pursue what you have learn'd.* And *Hom.* 58. on *John* 10. 1. *'Tis the mark of a thief, that he comes not in by the door, but another way: now by the door the testimony of the Scripture is signified.* And *Hom.* on *Gal.* 1. 8. *The Apostle says not if any man teach a contrary doctrine let him be accurs'd, or if he subvert the whole Gospel; but if he teach any thing besides the Gospel which you have receiv'd, or vary any little thing, let him be accurs'd.*

Of Cyril of Alexand. 20. *Cyril* of *Alexandria* against *Julian l.* 7. says, *The Holy Scripture is sufficient to make them who are instructed in it, wise unto salvation, and endued with most ample knowledge.*

Of Theodoret. 21. *Theodoret* Dial. 1. *I am perswaded only by the Holy Scripture.* And Dial. 2. *I am not so bold to affirm any thing, not spoken of in the Scripture.* And again Quest. 45. upon *Gen. We ought not to enquire after what is past over in silence, but acquiesce in what is written.*

From the premises laid down, the inference will be easy whether the Church of England be heretical in her determining the Scriptures to be a sufficient rule of faith without the aid of Tradition. 22. It were easy to enlarge this discourse into a Volume; but having taken, as they offer'd themselves, the Suffrages of the Writers of the four first Centuries, I shall not proceed to those that follow. If the Holy Scripture were a perfect rule of Faith and Manners to all Christians heretofore, we may reasonably assure our selves it is so still; and will now guide us into all necessary truth, and consequently

make

make us wise unto salvation, without the aid of oral Tradition, or the new mintage of a living infallible Judge of controversy. And the impartial Reader will be enabled to judge whether our appeal to the Holy Scripture, in all occasions of controversy, and recommendation of it to the study of every Christian, be that heresy and innovation which it is said to be.

23. It is, we know, severely imputed to the Scribes and Pharisees by our Saviour, that they took from the people *the key of knowledge*, Luke 11. 52. and had *made the word of God of none effect by their Traditions*, Matt. 15. 6. but they never attempted what has been since practiced by their successors in the Western Church, to take away the Ark of the Testament it self, and cut off, not only the efficacy, but very possession of the Word of God by their Traditions. Surely this had been exceeding criminal from any hand: but that the Bishops and Governours of the Church, and the universal and infallible Pastor of it, who claim the office to interpret the Scriptures, exhort unto, and assist in the knowledge of them, should be the men who thus rob the people of them, carries with it the highest aggravations both of cruelty and breach of trust. *If any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy*, says Saint *John*, Rev. 22. 19. *God shall take away his part out of the Book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.* What vengeance therefore awaits those who have taken away not only from one Book, but at once the Books themselves, even all the Scriptures, the whole Word of God?

The guilt of taking away the Scriptures from the people a guilt of the highest nature.

SECT. VII.

Historical reflexions upon the Events which have happen'd in the Church since the withdrawing of the Holy Scripture.

1. 'TWILL in this place be no useless contemplation to observe, after the Scriptures had been ravish'd from the people in the Church of *Rome*, what pitiful pretenders were admitted to succeed. And first because Lay-men were presum'd to be illiterate, and easily seducible by those writings which were in themselves difficult, and would be wrested by the *unlearned to their own destruction*; Pictures were recommended in their stead, and complemented as the Books of the Laity; which soon improv'd into a necessity of their worship, and that gross superstition which renders Christianity abominated by Turks, and Jews, and Heathens unto this day.

Pictures were made the book of the Laity when the Scriptures were taken from them.

2. I would not be hasty in charging Idolatry upon the Church of *Rome*, or all in her Communion; but that their Image-worship is a most fatal snare, in which vast numbers of unhappy souls are taken, no man can doubt who hath with any regard travail'd in Popish Countries, I my self and thousand of others, whom the late troubles, or other occasions sent abroad, are and have been witnesses thereof. Charity, 'tis true, believes all things, but it do's not oblige men to disbelieve their eyes. 'Twas the out-cry of *Micah* against the Danites, *Judg.* 18. 24. *ye have taken away my gods which I have made, and the priest, and are gone away, and what have I more?* but the Laity of the Roman Communion may enlarge the complaint, and say; you have taken away the Oracles of our God, and set up every where among us graven and molten Images, and Teraphims, and what have we more? and 'twas lately the loud, and I doubt is still, the unanswerable complaint of the poor Americans, that they were deny'd to worship their Pagod once in the year, when they who forbad them, worship'd theirs every day.

Hereby the ignorant became ensnar'd to Idolatry.

3. The Jews before the Captivity, notwithstanding the recent memory of the Miracles in Egypt and the Wilderness, and the first conquest of the Land of *Canaan*, with those that succeeded under the Judges and Kings of *Israel* and *Juda*; as also the express command of God, and the menaces of Prophets, ever and anon fell to downright Idolatry, but after their return unto this day, have kept themselves from falling into that sin, though they had no Prophets to instruct them, no miracles or government to enourage or constrain them. The reason of which a very learned man in his Discourse of religious Assemblies takes to be, the reading and teaching of the Law in their Synagogues; which was perform'd with great exactness after the

After the captivity of Babylon the Jews never fell into Idolatry, by their having the Scriptures constantly read in their Synagogues.

The western Christian Church has inverted the observation.

the return from the Captivity, but was not so perform'd before. And may we not invert the observation, and impute Image-worship now set up in the Christian Church, to the forbidding the reading of the Scripture in the Churches, and interdicting the private use, and institution in them?

A second supply in the place of the Scripture were Legends, which made Christianity to be thought ridiculous.

4. For a farther supplement in place of the Scriptures, whose History was thought not edifying enough, the Legends of the Saints were introduc'd; stories so stupid, that one would imagine them design'd as an experiment how far credulity could be impos'd upon; or else fram'd to a worse intent, that Christianity by them might be made ridiculous. Yet these are recommended to use and veneration, while in the mean time the Word of God is utterly forbidden, whereby the parties to this unhappy practice (that I may speak in the words of the Prophet *Jerem.* 2. 13.) *have committed two evils, they have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

A third consequent was the obliging the publick Prayers to be in an unknown tongue.

5. Farther yet, the same unreasonable tyranny which permitted not the Laity to understand Almighty God speaking to them in the Scripture; hinder'd them from being suffer'd to understand the Church or themselves speaking to him in their prayers; whilst the whole Roman office is so dispos'd, that in defiance of the Apostles discourse, 1 *Cor.* 14. *he that occupies the room of the unlearned must say Amen, to those prayers and praises which he has no comprehension of*: and by his endless repetitions of Pater's and Credo's, falls into that battology reprov'd by our Saviour, *Matt.* 6. 7. and as 'twas said of the woman of *Samaria*, John 4. 22. *knows not what he worships.* Yet this unaccountable practice is so much the darling of that Church, that when in *France* about eighteen years since, the Roman Missal was translated into the vulgar Tongue, and publish'd by the direction of several of their Bishops; the Clergy of *France* rose up in great fury against the attempt, anathematizing in their circular Epistles, *all that sold, read, or us'd the said Book*: and upon complaint unto Pope *Alexander* the VII. he resented the matter so deeply, as to issue out his Bull against it in the following words:

The Pope's resentment of the translation of the Missal by the Bishops of France.

6. *Whereas sons of perdition, endeavouring the destruction of souls, have translated the Roman Missal into the French Tongue, and so attempted to throw down and trample upon the Majesty of the holy Rites comprehended in Latin words: as we abominate and detest the novelty, which will deform the beauty of the Church, and produce disobedience, temerity, boldness, sedition and schism; so we condemn, reprobate and forbid, the said and all other such Translations, and interdict the reading and keeping to all and singular the faithful of whatever sex, degree, order, condition, dignity, honour, preeminence,* &c. *under pain of excommunication. And we command the copies to be immediately burnt,* &c. So mortal a sin it seems 'twas thought for the Laity to understand the Prayers in which they must communicate.

A fourth attempt of making a new authentick Text.

7. Nor is this all; agreeable to the other attempts upon the Holy Scripture, was the bold insolence of making a new authentick Text, in that unknown Tongue in which the offices of prayer had been, and were to be kept disguis'd; which was done by the decree of the Council of *Trent* in the fourth Session. But when the Council had given this prerogative to the Version which is call'd Vulgar, the succeeding Popes began to consider what that Version was; and this work *Pius* the fourth and fifth set upon; but prevented by death fail'd to compleat it, so that the honour of the performance fell to *Sixtus* the fifth, who in the plenitude of his Apostolick power, the Translation being reform'd to his mind, commanded it to be that genuine ancient Edition which the *Trent* Fathers had before made authentick, and under the pain of excommunication requir'd it to be so receiv'd: which he do's in this form: *Of our certain knowledge, and the plenitude of our Apostolick power, we order and declare that vulgar Edition which has been receiv'd for authentick by the Council of* Trent, *is without doubt or controversy to be esteem'd this very one, which being amended as well as it is possible, and printed at the Vatican press, we publish to be read in the whole Christian Republick, and in all Churches of the Christian world. Decreeing that it having been approv'd by the consent of the holy universal Church, and the holy Fathers, and then by the Decree of the general Council of* Trent, *and now by the Apostolick authority deliver'd to us by the Lord; is the true, legitimate, authentick, and undoubted, which is to be receiv'd and held in all publick and private Disputations, Lectures, Preachings and Expositions,* &c. But notwithstanding this certain knowledge and plenitude of Apostolick power, soon after came *Clement* the Eighth, and again resumes the work of his predecessour *Sixtus*, discovers great and many errors in it, and puts out one more reform'd, yet confest by himself to be imperfect; which now stands for the authentick Text, and carries the title of the Bible put forth by *Sixtus*, notwithstanding all its alterations. So well

do's

do's the Roman Church deserve the honour which she pretends to, of being the *Mistress of all Churches*; and so infallible is the holy Chair in its determinations: and lastly so authentick a Transcript of the Word of God (concerning which 'tis said *Matt.* 5. 18. *one jot or one tittle shall not fail*) is that which she establish'd, and that has receiv'd so many, and yet according to the confession of the infallible Corrector, wants still more alterations.

8. Dependent upon this, and as great a mischief as any of the former consequent to the withdrawing of the Scripture, I take to be the step it made to the overthrow of the ancient and the most useful discipline of the Church in point of Penance, whose rigours always heretofore preceded the possibility of having Absolution. Now of this we know a solemn part was the state of Audience, when the lapst person was receiv'd, after long attendance without doors, prostrations, and lamentations there, within the entrance of the Church; and was permitted with the Catechumens Candidates of Baptism, to hear the readings of the Scripture, and stay till Prayer began, but then depart. He was oblig'd to hear the terrours of the Lord, the threats of the Divine Law against sin and sinners, to stand among the unbaptiz'd and heathen multitude, and learn again the elements of that holy Faith from which he had prevaricated; and so in time be render'd capable of the devotions of the Faithful, and afterward the reception of the Eucharist. But when the Scriptures were thought useless or dangerous to be understood and heard, it was consequent that the state of Audience should be cut off from Penance, and that the next to it, upon the self-same principle should be dismist: and so the long probation formerly requir'd should be supplanted; and the compendious way of pardoning first, and repenting afterwards, the endless circle of sinning and being absolv'd, and then sinning and being absolv'd again, should prevail upon the Church. Which still obtains, notwithstanding the complaints, and irrefragable demonstrations of learned men even of the Romish Communion, who plainly shew this now receiv'd method, to be an innovation groundless and unreasonable, and most pernicious in its consequents.

A further consequent was the laying aside the antient course of penance.

9. And, by the way, we may take notice that there cannot be a plainer evidence of the judgment of the Church, concerning the necessity of the Scriptures being known, not only by the learned but mean Christian, and the interest they have therein; than is the ancient course of Penance, establish'd by the practice of all the first Ages, and almost as many Councils, whether general or local, as have decreed any thing concerning Discipline; with the penitentiary Books and Canons, which were written for the first eleven hundred years together in the whole Christian world. For if even the unbaptized Catechumen, and the lapst sinner, notwithstanding their slender knowledge in the mysteries of Faith, or frail pretence to the privilege thereof, had a right to the state of Audience, and was oblig'd to hear the Scripture read; surely the meanest unobnoxious Laick, was in as advantageous circumstances, and might not only be trusted with the reading of those sacred Books, but might claim them as his birth-right.

Heretofore not only those who were under censure, but the unbaptiz'd were in the state of Audience to hear the Scriptures read.

10. I may justly, over and above what has been hitherto alledg'd, impute to the Governours of the same Church, and their with-holding from the Laity the Holy Scripture; the many dangerous errors, gross ignorances, and scandalous immoralities which have prevail'd among them both. It is no new method of divine vengeance, that there should *be like people, like priest*, Hos. 4. 9. *and that the idle shepherd who led his flock into the ditch, should fall therein himself*, Matt. 15. 14. And as the Prophet *Zachary* describes it, chap. 11. 17. *The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkned.*

Ignorance and immorality consequents of withdrawing the Scripture.

11. But no consequence can be more obviously deducible from that practice, than that men should justify the with-holding of the Scripture by lessening its credit, and depreciating its worth: which has occasion'd those reproaches which by the writers of the Church of *Rome*, of best note, have been cast upon it. As that it was *a nose of wax, a leaden rule, a deaf and useless deputy to God in the office of a judge; of less authority than the Roman Church, and of no more credit than* Esop's *Fables, but for the testimony of the said Church; that they contain things apt to raise laughter or indignation, that the Latin Translation in the Complutensian Bible is plac'd between the Hebrew Text, and the Septuagint Version, as our Saviour was at his Crucifixion between two thieves; and that the Vulgar edition is of such authority that the Originals ought to be mended by it, rather than it should be mended from them*: which are the complements of Cardinal *Bellarmin*, *Hosius*, *Eckius*, *Perron*, *Ximenes*, *Coquæus*, and others of that Communion: words to be answer'd by a Thunderbolt, and fitter for the mouth of a *Celsus* or a *Porphyrie*, than of the pious Sons, and zealous Champions of the Church of Christ.

And lastly lewd reproaches of Scripture.

The excuse made by the Romanists considered.

12. 'Tis to be expected that the Romanists should now wipe their mouths, and plead not guilty; telling us that they permit the Scripture to the Laity in their mother Tongue: And to that purpose the Fathers of *Rhemes* and *Doway* have publish'd an English Bible for those of their Communion. I shall therefore give a short and plain account of the whole affair, as really it stands, and then on God's name let the Romanists make the best of their Apology.

The licence of reading the Scripture is so clog'd, that few will be capable of that indulgence.

13. The fourth rule of the Index of prohibited Books compos'd upon the command and auspice of the Council of *Trent*, and publish'd by the Authority of *Pius* the fourth, *Sixtus* the fifth, and *Clement* the eighth, runs thus, *Since 'tis manifest by experience, that if the Holy Bible be suffer'd promiscuously in the Vulgar Tongue, such is the temerity of men, that greater detriment than advantage will thence arise; in this matter let the judgment of the Bishop or Inquisitor be stood to: that with the advice of the Curate or Confessor, they may give leave for the reading of the Bible in the vulgar Tongue, Translated by Catholicks, to such as they know will not receive damage, but increase of Faith and Piety thereby. Which faculty they shall have in writing; and whosoever without such faculty shall presume to have or to read the Bible, he shall not 'till he hath deliver'd it up, receive Absolution of his sins.* Now (to pass over the iniquity of obliging men to ask leave to do that which God Almighty commands) when 'tis consider'd how few of the Laity can make means to the Bishop or Inquisitor, or convince them, or the Curate or Confessor, that they are such who will not receive damage, but increase of Faith and Piety by the reading of the Scripture; and also have interest to prevail with them for their favour herein: and after all, can and will be at the charge of taking out the faculty, which is so penally requir'd: 'tis easy to guess what thin numbers of the Laity are likely or indeed capable of reaping benefit by this Indulgence pretended to be allow'd them.

Besides, is in it self declar'd to be void.

14. But, besides all this what shall we say, if the power it self of giving Licences be a meer shew, and really signifies just nothing? In the observation subjoyn'd to this fourth rule it is declar'd, That *the Impression and Edition thereof gives no new faculty to Bishops, or Inquisitors, or Superiors of Regulars to grant Licences of buying, reading, or retaining, Bibles publish'd in a vulgar Tongue; since hitherto by the command and practice of the holy Roman and universal Inquisition, the power of giving such faculties, to read or retain vulgar Bibles, or any parts of Scripture of the Old or New Testament, in any vulgar Tongue; or also Summaries or historical Compendiums of the said Bibles or Books of Scripture, in whatever Tongues they are written, has been taken away.* And sure if a Layman cannot read the Bible without a faculty, and it is not in any ones power to grant it; 'twill evidently follow that he cannot read it: And so the pretence of giving liberty, owns the shame of openly refusing it, but has no other effect or consequence. And if any Romanist among us, or any other Protestant Country enjoys any liberty herein, 'tis meerly by connivance, and own'd to a fear lest the votary should be lost, and take the Bible where it was without difficulty to be had, if strictness should be us'd. And should Popery, which God forbid, become paramount, the Translations of the Scripture into our Mother Tongues, would be no more endur'd here, than they are in *Spain*: and they who have formerly been wary in communicating the Scriptures, remembring how thereby their errors have been detected, would upon a revolution effectually provide for the future, and be sure to keep their people in an Egyptian darkness, that might it self be felt, but that allow'd the notices of no other object. They would not be content with that composition of the Ammonites, to *thrust out all the right eyes* of those that submitted to them, 1 *Sam.* 11. 2. but would put out both, as the Philistines did to *Samson*, that they might make their miserable captive for ever *grind in their Mill*, Judg. 16. 21.

The way for Protestants to keep their Bibles, is to live worthy the blessing they enjoy in them.

15. But this heaviest of judgments will never fall upon the reform'd Churches, till by their vicious practice and contempt of the Divine Law, they have deserted their profession, and made themselves utterly unworthy of the blessings they enjoy, and the light of that Gospel which with noon-day brightness has shin'd among them. Upon which account, I suppose it may not be impertinent in the next place to subjoyn some plain directions, and cautionary advices, concerning the use of these sacred Books.

SECT.

SECT. VIII.

Necessary Cautions to be us'd in the reading of the Holy Scripture.

What qualifications are necessary to make the Scripture useful to the reader.

1. IT is a common observation, that the most generous and sprightly Medicines are the most unsafe, if not apply'd with due care and regimen: And the remark holds as well in spiritual as corporal remedies. The Apostle asserts it upon his own experience that the Doctrine of the Gospel, which was to some *the savour of Life unto Life, was to others the savour of Death,* 2 Cor. 2. 15. And the same effect that the oral Word had then, the written Word may have now; not that either the one or the other have any thing in them that is of it self mortiferous, but becomes so by the ill disposition of the persons who so pervert it. It is therefore well worth our enquiry, what qualifications on our part are necessary to make the Word be to us what it is in it self, *the power of God unto salvation,* Rom. 1. 16. Of these some are previous before our reading, some are concomitant with it, and some are subsequent and follow after it.

First, to come with sincerity.

2. Of those that go before, sincerity is a most essential requisit: by sincerity, I mean an upright intention, by which we direct our reading to that proper end for which the holy Scriptures were design'd; *viz.* the knowing Gods will in order to the practicing it. This honest simplicity of heart is that which Christ represents by the *good ground,* where alone it was that the seed could fructify, *Mat.* 13. 8. And he that brings not this with him, brings only the shadow of a Disciple. The *word of God is* indeed *sharper than a two-edged sword,* Heb. 4. 12. but what impression can a sword make on a body of air; which still slips from, and eludes its thrusts? And as little can all the practical discourses of holy Writ make on him, who brings only his speculative faculties with him, and leaves his will and affections behind him; which are the only proper subjects for it to work on.

As the guide of practice.

3. To this we may probably impute that strange inefficaciousness we see of the Word. Alas men rarely apply it to the right place: our most inveterate diseases lie in our morals; and we suffer the Medicine to reach no farther than our intellects. As if he that had an ulcer in his bowels, should apply all his balsoms and sanatives only to his head. 'Tis true, the holy Scriptures are the treasures of Divine Wisdom; the Oracles to which we should resort for saving knowledge: but they are also the rule and guide of holy Life: and he that covets to know Gods will for any purpose but to practice it, is only studious to entitle himself to the greater number of *stripes,* Luke 12. 47.

And not bare knowledge

4. Nay farther, he that affects only the bare knowledge, is oft disappointed even of that. The Scripture, like the Pillar of fire and cloud, enlightens the Israelites, those who sincerely resign themselves to its guidance; but it darkens and confounds the Egyptians, *Exod.* 14. 20. And 'tis frequently seen, that those who read only to become knowing, are toll'd on by their curiosity into the more abstruse and mysterious parts of Scripture, where they entangle themselves in inextricable mazes and confusions; and instead of acquiring more superlative knowledge, lose those easy and common notions which lie obvious to every plain well meaning Reader. I fear this Age affords too many and too frequent instances of this, in men who have lost God in the midst of his Word, and studied Scripture till they have renounc'd its Author.

The speculative enquirers frequently lose God in the midst of his Word.

5. And sure this infatuation is very just, and no more than God himself has warn'd us of, who *takes the wise in their craftiness,* Job 5. 12, 13. but appropriates his *secrets only to them that fear him,* and has promis'd *to teach the meek his way,* Psal. 25. 9, 14. And this was the method Christ observ'd in his preaching; unveiling those truths to his Disciples, which to the Scribes and Pharisees, his inquisitive, yet refractory hearers, he wrapt up in parables: not that he dislik'd their desire of knowledge, but their want of sincerity: which is so fatal a defect as blasts our pursuits, tho of things in themselves never so excellent. This we find exemplifyed in *Simon Magus* Acts 8. who though he coveted a thing in it self very desirable, the power of conferring the Holy Ghost, yet desiring it not only upon due conditions, but for sinister ends, he not only mist of that, but was (after all his convincement by the Apostles miracles, and the engagement of his Baptism) immerst *in the gall of bitterness;*

and at last advanc'd to that height of blasphemy, as to set up himself for a God, so becoming a lasting *memento*, how unsafe it is to prevaricate in holy things.

There is requir'd sincerity not only in reference to practice, but also speculation.

6. But as there is a sincerity of the Will in order to practice, so there is also a sincerity of the understanding in order to belief; and this is also no less requisite to the profitable reading of Scripture. I mean by this, that we come with a preparation of mind, to imbrace indifferently whatever God there reveals as the object of our Faith: that we bring our own opinions, not as the clue by which to unfold Scripture, but to be try'd and regulated by it. The want of this has been of very pernicious consequence in matter both of Faith and Speculation. Men are commonly prepossest strongly with their own notions, and their errand to Scripture is not to lend them light to judge of them, but aids to back and defend them.

This appears in several great instances.

7. Of this there is no Book of Controversy that do's not give notorious proof. The Socinian can easily overlook the beginning of St. *John* that says, *The Word was God*, John 1. 1. and all those other places which plainly assert the Deity of our Saviour; if he can but divert to that other more agreeable Text, that *the Father is greater than I.* Among the Romanists, *Peter's* being said to be *first among the Apostles*, Matt. 10. 2. and that *on that Rock Christ would build his Church*, Matt. 16. 18. carries away all attention from those other places where Saint *Paul* says he was not *behind the very chiefest of the Apostles*, 2 Cor. 11. 5. that upon him lay *the care of all the Churches*, 2 Cor. 11. 28. and that the Church was not built upon the *foundation of some one, but all the twelve Apostles*, Rev. 21. 14. So it fares in the business of the Eucharist: *This is my body*, Matt. 26. 26. carries it away clear for Transubstantiation, when our Saviour's calling that which he drunk *the fruit of the vine*, Matt. 26. 29. and then Saint *Paul's* naming the Elements in the Lords Supper several times over, Bread and Wine; *The Bread that we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ: the Cup that we bless, is it not the Communion, &c.* 1 Cor. 10. 16. And again, *He that eats this Bread, and drinks this Cup unworthily, &c.* 1 Cor. 11. can make no appearance of an argument.

Men engag'd look on contrary Texts as enemies, and fortify against them.

8. Thus men once engag'd ransack for Texts that carry some correspondence to the opinions they have imbib'd; and those how do they rack and scrue to bring to a perfect conformity; and improve every little probability into a demonstration? On the other side, the contrary Texts they look on as enemies, and consider them no farther than to provide fences and guards against them: So they bring Texts not into the scales to weigh, but into the field to skirmish, as Partizans and Auxiliaries of such or such opinions.

Bend the rule to their work.

9. By this force of prepossession it is, that that sacred Rule, which is the measure and standard of all rectitude, is it self bow'd and distorted to countenance and abet the most contrary tenets: and like a variable picture, represents differing shapes according to the light in which you view it. And sure we cannot do it a worse office than to represent it thus dissonant to it self. Yet thus it must still be till men come unbiast to the reading of it. And certainly there is all the reason in the world they should do so: the ultimate *end of our faith is but the salvation of our souls*, 1 Pet. 1. 9. and we may be sure the Scripture can best direct us what Faith it is which will lead us to that end.

We should enquire the way to heaven with a travellers indifference.

10. Why should we not then have the same indifference which a traveller hath, whether his way lay on this hand or that; so as it be the direct road to his journeys end? For although it be infinitely material that I embrace right principles, yet 'tis not so that this should be right rather than the other: and our wishes that it should be so, proceed only from our prepossessions and fondness of our own conceptions, than which nothing is more apt to intercept the clear view of Truth. It therefore nearly concerns us to deposit them, and to give up our selves without reserve to the guidance of God's Word, and give it equal credit when it thwarts, as when it complies with our own notions.

The prejudicate reserve the last appeal to themselves, tho' they pretend the Scripture to be a judge of controversies.

11. Without this, though we may call Scripture the rule of Faith, and judge of controversies; yet 'tis manifest we make it not so, but reserve still the last appeal to our own prejudicate fancies: and then no wonder, though we fall under the same occecation which our Saviour upbraids to the Jews, *that seeing, we see not, neither do we understand*, Matt. 13. 14. For he that will not be sav'd God's way, will hardly be so by his own. He that resolves not impartially to embrace all the Scriptures dictates, comes to them as unsincerely, as the remnant of the Jews did to *Jeremiah* to enquire of the Lord for them, which he no sooner had done, but they protest against his message, *Jer.* 42. 20. and may expect as fatal an event.

12. But

12. But there are a set of men who deal yet more insincerely with the Word; that read it insidiously, on purpose to collect matter of objection and cavil; that with a malicious diligence compare Texts in hope to find contradictions; and read attentively, but to no other end than to remark incoherences and defects in the stile: which when they think they have started, they have their design; and never will use a quarter of the same diligence in considering how they may be solv'd or consulting with those who may assist them in it. For I think I may appeal to the generality of those who have rais'd the loudest clamors against the Scripture, whether they have endeavour'd to render themselves competent judges of it by inquiring into the Originals, or informing themselves of those local customs, peculiar Idioms, and many other circumstances, by which obscure Texts are to be clear'd. And though I do not affirm it necessary to salvation that every man should do this; yet I may affirm it necessary to him that will pretend to judge of the Bible: and he that without this condemns it, do's it a manifest injury, as a Judge that should pass sentence only upon the Indictment, without hearing the defence.

There are others who read the Scriptures insidiously to cavil at them.

13. And certainly there cannot be any thing more unmanly and disingenuous, than for men to inveigh and condemn before they inquire and examine. Yet this is the thing upon which so many value themselves, assuming to be men of reason for that for which the Scripture pronounces them brute beasts: viz. *the speaking evil of those things they understand not*, 2 Pet. 2. 12. Would man use due diligence, no doubt many of those seeming contradictions would be reconcil'd, and the obscurities cleared: and if any should after all remain, he might find twenty things fitter to charge it on, than want of verity or perspicuity in the inspir'd writers.

Who yet never throughly consider'd them.

14. Alas what human writing is there of near that Antiquity, wherein there are not many passages unintelligible? And indeed, unless modern times knew all those national customs, obsolete Laws, particular Rites and Ceremonies, Phrases and proverbial Sayings, to which such ancient Books refer, 'tis impossible but some passages must still remain obscure. Yet in these we ordinarily have so much candor, as to impute their unintelligibleness to our own ignorance of those things which should clear them, the improprieties of stile, the variation that times make in dialects, or to the errors of Scribes, and do not presently exclaim against the Authors as false and impertinent, or discard the whole Book for some such passages.

Allowances which the circumstances of the writing the Scripture necessarily require.

15. And sure what allowance we make to other Books, may with more reason be made to the Bible; which having been writ so many Ages since, past through infinite variety of hands, and (which is above all) having been the object of the devils and wicked mens Malice, lies under greater disadvantages than any human composure: And doubtless men would be as equitable to that as they are to others, were it not that they more wish to have that false or irrational than any other Book. The plain parts of it, the precepts and threatnings speak clearer than they desire, gall and fret them; and therefore they will revenge themselves upon the obscurer, and seem angry that there are some things they understand not, when indeed their real displeasure is at those they do.

Which allowances are given to other books with less reason.

16. A second qualification preparatory to reading the Scripture is reverence. When we take the Bible in our hands, we should do it with other sentiments and apprehensions than when we take a common Book; considering that is the word of God, the instrument of our salvation; or upon our abuse of it, a promoter of our ruin.

A second preparatory qualification to the reading the Scripture is reverence.

17. And sure this, if duly apprehended, cannot but strike us with a reverential awe, make us to say with *Jacob*, Gen. 28. 17. *surely God is in this place*; controle all trifling fancies, and make us read, not for custom or divertisement, but with those solemn and holy intentions which become the dignity of its Author. Accordingly we find holy men have in all Ages been affected with it; and some to the inward reverence of the mind have joyn'd the outward of the body also, and never read it but upon their knees: an example that may both instruct and reproach our profaneness; who commonly read by chance, and at a venture: If a Bible happens in the way, we take it up as we would do a Romance, or Play-Book; only herein we differ, that we dismiss it much sooner, and retain less of its impressions.

Not to read it casually and at a venture.

18. It was a Law of *Numa*, that no man should meddle with Divine things, or worship the Gods, in passing, or by accident, but make it a set and solemn business. And every one knows with how great ceremony and solemnity the heathen Oracles were consulted. How great a shame is it then for Christians to defalk that reverence from the true God, which heathens allow'd their false ones?

Which sort of negligence Numa forbad in sacred things.

This negligence happens either for want of habitual reverence to God; or our actual exciting it.

19. Now this proceeds sometimes from the want of that habitual reverence we should always have to it as Gods word, and sometimes from want of actually exciting it when we go to read: for if the habit lies only dormant in us, and be not awak'd by actual consideration, it avails us as little in our reading, as habitual strength of a man do's towards labour, when he will not exert it for that end.

Where there is no reverence, there will be no obedience.

20. We ought therefore, as to make it our deliberate choice to read Gods word; so when we do it, to stir up our selves to those solemn apprehensions of its dignity and authority, as may render us malleable, and apt to receive its impressions: for where there is no reverence, 'tis not to be expected there should be any or genuine or lasting obedience.

Saint Austin makes the first requisite to the knowledge of the Scripture, the love of it.

21. Saint *Austin* in his Tract to *Honoratus* of the advantage of believing, makes the first requisite to the knowlege of the Scriptures to be the love of them. *Believe me*, says he, *every thing in the Scripture is sublime and divine, its truth and doctrine are most accommodate to the refreshment and building up of our minds: and in all respects so order'd that every one may draw thence what is sufficient for him; provided he approaches it with devotion piety and religion. The proof of this may require much reasoning and discourse. But this I am first to perswade, that you do not hate the Authors, and then that you love them. Had we an ill opinion of* Virgil, *nay, if upon the account of the reputation he has gain'd with our Predecessors, we did not greatly love, before we understood him; we should never patiently go through all the difficult questions Grammarians raise about him. Many employ themselves in commenting upon him; we esteem most, whose exposition most commends the Book, and shews that the Author not only was free from errour, but did excellently well where he is not understood. And if such an account happens not to be given, we impute it rather to the Interpreter than the Poet.*

None enquires of the tenets of any Sect of Philosophers, from his adversary.

22. Thus the good Father; whose words I have transcrib'd at large, as being remarkable to the present purpose; he also shews that the mind of no author is to be learn'd from one averse to his doctrine: as that 'tis vain to enquire of *Aristotle's* Book from one of a different Sect: or of *Archimedes* from *Epicurus*: the discourse will be as displeasing as the speaker; and that shall be esteem'd absurd, which comes from one that is envy'd or despis'd.

A third preparative is Prayer.

23. A third preparative to our reading should be prayer. The Scripture as it was dictated at first by the holy Spirit, so must still owe its effects and influence to its co-operation. *The things of God*, the Apostle tells us, *are spiritually discern'd*, 1 Cor. 2. 14. And though the natural man may well enough apprehend the letter, and grammatical sense of the Word; yet its power and energy, that insinuative perswasive force whereby it works on hearts, is peculiar to the Spirit; and therefore without his aids, the Scripture, whilst it lies open before our eyes, may be *as a Book that is seal'd*, Esai. 29. 11. be as ineffective as if the characters were illegible.

This will be the more necessary, because the devil is busie to steal away the seed that is sown.

24. Besides our Saviour tells us, the devil is still busy *to steal away the seed as soon as it is sown*, Matt. 13. 17. And unless we have some better guards than our own vigilance, he is sure enough to prosper in his attempt. Let it therefore be our care to invoke the Divine Aid; and when ever we take the Bible into our hands, to dart up at least a hearty ejaculation, that we may find its effects in our hearts. Let us say with *David*, *Open thou mine eyes, O Lord, that I may see the wondrous things of thy Law. Blessed art thou, O Lord, O teach me thy statutes*, Psal. 119. Nay indeed, 'twill be fit matter of a daily solemn devotion, as our Church has made it an annual in the Collect on the second Sunday in Advent: a prayer so apt and fully expressive of what we should desire in this particular, that if we transcribe not only the example, but the very words, I know not how we can form that part of our devotion more advantageously.

Considerations requir'd at the time of reading.

25. In the second place we are to consider what is requir'd of us at the time of reading the Scripture; which consists principally in two things. The first of these is attention, which is so indispensably requisite, that without it all Books are alike, and all equally insignificant: for he that adverts not to the sense of what he reads, the wisest discourses signify no more to him, than the most exquisite musick do's to a man perfectly deaf. The letters and syllables of the Bible are no more sacred than those of another Book; 'tis the sense and meaning only that is divinely inspir'd: and he that considers only the former, may as well entertain himself with a spelling-book.

'Tis a sad contemplation that the Scripture is read most diligently by those who would cavil at it.

26. We must therefore keep our minds fixt, and attend to what we read: 'tis a folly and lightness not to do so in human Authors; but 'tis a sin and danger not to do so in this Divine Book. We know there can scarce be a greater instance of contempt and disvalue, than to hear a man speak, and not at all mind what he says: yet this vilest affront do all those put upon God, who hear or read his Word, and

give

give it no attention. Yet I fear the practice is not more impious than it is frequent: for there are many that read the Bible, who if at the end of each Chapter they should be call'd to account, I doubt they could produce very slender collections: and truly 'tis a sad consideration, that that sacred Book is read most attentively by those, who read it as some *preach the Gospel*, Phil. 1. 15. *but of envy and strife.* How curiously do men inspect, nay ransack and embowel a Text to find a pretence for cavil and objection, whilst men who profess to look there for life and salvation, read with such a wretchless heedlesness, as if it could tell them nothing they were concern'd in, and to such 'tis no wonder if their reading brings no advantage. God is not in this sense *found of those that seek him not*, Esai. 65. 1. 'Tis Satans part to serve himself of the bare words and characters of Holy Writ, for charms and amulets: the vertue God has put there consists in the sense and meaning, and can never be drawn out by drousy inadverting Readers.

27. This unattentiveness fore-stalls all possibility of good. How shall that convince the understanding, or perswade the affections, which do's not so much as enter the imagination? So that in this case the seed seems more cast away than in any of those instances the parable gives, *Matt.* 13. In those it still fell upon the soil, but in this it never reaches that; but is scatter'd and dissipated, as with a mighty wind, by those thoughts which have prepossess'd the mind. Let no man therefore take this sacred Book into his hand, till he has turn'd out all distracting fancies, and has his faculties free and vacant for those better objects which will there present themselves. And when he has so dispos'd himself for attention, then let him contrive to improve that attention to the best advantage. *The thoughts of the world are first to be laid aside before we take up the Scripture.*

28. To which purpose it may be very conducive to put it into some order and method. As for instance, when he reads the doctrinal part of Scripture, let him first and principally advert to those plain Texts which contain the necessary points of Faith: that he may not owe his Creed only to his education, the institution of his Parents or Tutors; but may know the true foundation on which it is bottom'd, *viz.* the Word of God, and may thence be able to justify his Faith: and as St. *Peter* exhorts, be ready to give an answer to *every man that asks him a reason of the hope that is in him*, 1 Pet. 3. 15. For want of this it is, that Religion sits so loose upon men that every wind of Doctrine blows them into distinct and various forms; till at last their Christianity it self vapours away and disappears. *Herein 'twill be conducive to reflect apart on Doctrinals,*

29. But let men be careful thus to secure the foundation, and then 'twill be commendable in them (who are capable of it) to aspire to higher degrees of speculation: yet even in these it will be their safest course chiefly to pursue such as have the most immediate influence on practice, and be more industrious to make observations of that sort, than curious and critical remarks, or bold conjectures upon those mysteries on which God has spread a veil. *And Precepts.*

30. But besides a mans own particular collections, it will be prudence in him to advantage himself of those of others, and to consult the learned'st and best Expositors: and that not only upon a present emergency, when he is to dispute a point, (as most do) but in the constant course of his reading, wherein he will most sedately and dispassionately judge of the notions they offer. *To take in the assistance of Expositors.*

31. As to the choice of the portions of Scripture to be read in course, though I shall not condemn that of reading the whole Bible in order, yet 'tis apparent that some parts of it (as that of the Levitical Law) are not so aptly accommodated to our present state, as others are; consequently not so edificatory to us: and therefore I cannot see why any man should oblige himself to an equal frequency in reading them. And to this our Church seems to give her suffrage, by excluding such out of her publick Lessons. And if we govern our private reading by her measures, it will well express our deference to her judgment; who has selected some parts of Scripture, not that she would keep her children in ignorance of any, but because they tend most immediately to practice. *Some parts of Scripture require more of our study than others.*

32. Neither will the daily reading the Scripture in the Rubrick's order, hinder any man from acquainting himself with the rest. For he may take in the other parts as supernumeraries to his constant task, and read them as his leisure and inclination shall prompt. So that all the hurt that can accrue to him by this method, is the being invited to read sometimes extraordinary proportions. *The method of the Church excludes not additions of our own.*

33. If it be objected, that to those who daily hear the Church Service, 'Twill be a kind of tautology, first to read those Lessons in private, which soon after they shall hear read publickly: I answer that whatever men may please to call it, 'twill really be an advantage: For he that shall read a chapter by himself with due consi- *The objection against using the same readings with the Church is answer'd.*

 deration,

deration, and consulting of good Paraphrasts, will have div'd so far into the sense of it, that he will much better comprehend it when he hears it read: as on the other side, the hearing it read so immediately after will serve to confirm and rivet the sense in his mind. The one is as the conning, the other as the repeating the Lesson; which every School-boy can tell us is best done at the nearest distance to each other. But I shall not contend for this, or any particular method: let the Scriptures be read in porportion to every mans leisure and capacity, and read with attention; and we need not be scrupulous about circumstances, when the main duty is secur'd.

Distinction is to be made between temporary precepts, and perpetual.

34. But as in the doctrinal, so in the preceptive part, there is a caution to be used in our attention. For we are to distinguish between those temporary precepts that were adapted to particular times and occasions, and such as are of perpetual obligation. He that do's not this, may bring himself under the Jewish Law, or believe a necessity of selling all and giving it to the poor, because 'twas Christs command to the rich man, *Matt.* 19. or incur other considerable mischiefs.

And those which are of universal and of particular concern.

35. Thus frequently commands are put in comprehensive indefinite words, but concern only the Generality to whom the Law is written; and not those who are entrusted with the vindication of their contempt. Accordingly 'tis said, *Thou shalt not kill*, Mark 10. 19. which concerns the private person; but extends not to the Magistrate in the execution of his office, who *is a revenger* appointed by God, *and bears not the sword in vain*, Rom. 13. 4. So the injunction not *to swear at all*, Matt. 5. 34. refers to the common transactions of life; but not those solemn occasions where an oath is to give glory to God, *and is the end of all strife*, Heb. 6. 16. Yet these mistakes at this day prevail with Anabaptists and Quakers, and bottom their denial of the Magistrates power to protect his Subjects by war, and to determine differences in Peace, by the oath of witnesses in judicial Proceedings.

Also between primary and secondary commands.

36. There is another distinction we are to attend to; and that is between absolute and primary commands, and secondary ones: the former we are to set a special remark upon, as those upon whose observance or violation our eternal life or death inseparably depends. And therefore our first and most solicitous care must be concerning them. I mention this not to divert any from aspiring to the highest degrees of perfection: but to reprove that preposterous course many take, who lay the greatest weight upon those things on which God lays the least; and have more zeal for oblique intimations, than for express downright commands; nay think by the one to commute for the contempt of the other. For example, fasting is recommended to us in Scripture, but in a far lower key than moral duties: rather as an expedient and help to vertue, than as properly a vertue it self. And yet we may see men scrupulous in that, who startle not at injustice and oppression (that clamorous sin that cries to heaven) who pretend to mortify their appetites by denying it its proper food or being luxurious in one sort of it; and yet glut their avarice, eat up the poor, *and devour widows houses*, Matt. 23.

Moral honesty is to be first attended to and secur'd.

37. To such as these 'twould be good advice to fix their attention on the absolute commands, to study moral honesty and the essentials of Christianity; to make a good progress there, and do what God indispensably requires: and then it may be seasonable to think of voluntary oblations: but till then they are so far from homage, that they are the most reproachful flattery; an attempt to bribe God against himself; and a sacrilege, like that of *Dionysius*, who took *Apollo*'s golden robe, and gave him a stuff one.

A second requisite in reading is application of all things to our selves.

38. The second thing requisite in our reading is application: this is the proper end of our attention: and without this we may be very busy to very little purpose. The most laborious attention without it, puts us but in the condition of those poor slaves that labour in the mines: who with infinite toil dig that oar of which they shall never partake. If therefore we will appropriate that rich treasure, we must apply, and so make it our own.

Whether it be in narrations of history and fact,

39. Let us then at every period of holy Writ, reflect and look on our selves as the persons spoken to. When we find *Philip* giving baptism to the Eunuch upon this condition, that he *believes with all his heart*, Acts 8. let us consider that unless we do so, our baptism (like a thing surrepitiously obtain'd) conveys no title to us, will avail us nothing.

Or in denunciations.

40. When we read our Saviours denunciation to the Jews, *except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish*; Luke 13. 5. we are to look on it as if addrest immediately to our selves; and conclude as great a necessity of our repentance. In those black catalogues of crimes which the Apostle mentions, 1 *Cor.* 6. 10. and *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, 22. as excluding from the kingdom of heaven, we are to behold our own guilts arraign'd, and

and to resolve that the same crimes will as certainly shut heavens gates against us, as those to whom those Epistles were immediatly directed. In all the precepts of good life and Christian vertue, we are to think our selves as nearly and particularly concern'd, as if we had been Christ's Auditors on the Mount. So proportionably in all the threats and promises we are either to tremble or hope, according as we find our selves adhere to those sins or vertues to which they are affixt.

41. This close application would render what we read operative and effective, which without it will be useless and insignificant. We may see an instance of it in *David*; who was not at all convinc'd of his own guilt by *Nathan*'s parable (though the most opposite that was imaginable.) till he roundly apply'd it, saying, *Thou art the man*: 2 Sam. 12. And unless we treat our selves at the same rate, the Scripture may fill our heads with high notions, nay with many speculative truths, which yet amounts to no more than the Devils Theology, *James* 2. 19. and will as little advantage us.

Which application can only render reading operative and effective.

42. It now remains that we speak of what we are to do after our reading; which may be summ'd up in two words: Recollect and Practice. Our memories are very frail as to things of this nature. And therefore we ought to impress them as deep as we can, by reflecting on what we have read. It is an observation out of the Levitical Law, that those beasts only were clean, and fit for sacrifice, *that chew'd the cud*, Lev. 11. 4. And though the ceremony were Jewish, the moral is Christian, and admonishes us how we should revolve and ruminate on spiritual instructions. Without this what we hear or read slips insensibly from us, and like letters writ in chalk, is wip'd out by the next succeeding thought: but recollection engraves and indents the characters in the mind. And he that would duly use it, would find other manner of impressions; more affective and more lasting than reading will leave.

Requisites after reading, first recollection.

43. We find it thus in all Sciences: he that only reads over the rules, and lays aside the thoughts of them together with his Book, will make but a slow advance; whilst he that plods and studies upon them, repeates and reinforces them upon his mind, soon arrives to an eminency. By this it was that *David* attain'd to that perfection in Gods Law as to outstrip his teachers, *and understand more than the Ancients*, Psal. 119. 99, 100. because it was his *meditation* as he himself tells us, *verse* 97. 99.

Which we find necessary in the study of all sciences.

44. Let us therefore pursue the same method; and when we have read a portion of Scripture, let us recollect what observable things we have there met with: what exhortations to vertue, or determents from vice; what promises to obedience, or menaces for the contrary: what examples of Gods vengeance against such or such sins, or what instances of his blessing upon duties. If we do this daily, we cannot but amass together a great stock of Scripture documents, which will be ready for us to produce upon every occasion. Satan can assault us no where, but we shall be provided of a guard, a *Scriptum est*; which we see was the sole armour the Captain of our salvation us'd in this encounter with him, *Matt.* 4. *ver.* 4, 7, and 10. and will be as succesful to us, if we will duly manage it.

And will have the same influence in divine.

45. The last thing requir'd as consequent to our reading, is practice. This is the ultimate end, to which all the foregoing qualifications are directed. And if we fail here, the most assiduous diligence in all the former will be but lost labour. Let us mean never so well, attend never so close, recollect never so exactly; if after all we do not practice, all the rest will serve but to inhance our guilt. Christianity is an active Science, and the Bible was given us not meerly for a theam of speculation, but for a rule of life.

Secondly practice is requir'd.

46. And alas, what will it avail us that our opinions are right, if our manners are crooked? When the Scripture has shew'd us what God requires of us, nay, has evinc'd to us the reasonableness of the injunctions, the great agreeableness which they have to the excellency of our nature: and has back'd this with the assurance that *in keeping of them there shall be a great reward*, Psal. 19. 11. if in the midst of such importunate invitations to life we will chuse death; we are indeed *worthy*, as the Wise-man speaks, *to take part with it*, Wisd. 1. 16. our crimes are hereby increas'd to a monstrous bulk, and also depriv'd of that veil and shelter which darkness and ignorance would have given them. And a vicious Christian may have cause at the last day to wish that he had studied the Alcoran rather than the Bible. His sensualities might then have pleaded, that they were but the anticipating his Paradise, taking up that before hand, which his religion propos'd to him as his *Summum bonum*, his final and highest aim. But with what confusion must a Christian then appear, whose institution obliges him to mortify the flesh: and yet has made it the business of his life, not only to satisfy, but even to enrage and enflame its appetites? that

'Twill not avail us that our opinions are right, if our manners be crooked.

has set up a counter-discipline to that of the Gospel he professes; and when that requires austerities and self-denials, to reduce corrupt nature to a tameness and subjection, has not only pull'd off the bridle, but us'd the spur; contriv'd Arts to debauch even corruption it self; and has forc'd his reluctant nature upon studied and artificial lewdness? Such men may be thought to have read the Scripture with no other design than to be sure to run counter to it; that by informing themselves of Gods will, they may know the more exactly how to affront and contradict it.

'Tis monstrous villany to read with malice and contempt.

47. Nay, so it is, too many unto malice add contempt; are not content only sullenly to resist its Precepts, but despise and revile them also, arraign the wisdom of God, and pronounce the Divine Laws to be weak and impertinent; lay their Scenes of ridiculous mirth in the Bible; rally in the sacred Dialect: and play the Buffoons with the most serious thing in the world. An impious licentiousness which is now grown to that height, that it is one of the wonders of Gods long-suffering that there are not as many eminent instances of the vengeance as there are of the guilt. I have formerly complain'd of it, and must still crave leave to do so. It is indeed so spreading an infection, that we can never be sufficiently arm'd against it. Some degrees of it have tainted many who have not utterly renounc'd their reverence for the Bible: there being those who in their solemn moods own it as Gods word, and profess they must finally stand or fall by its verdict; who yet in their jocular humors make light and irreverent applications of its phrases and sentences, furnish out their little jests in its attire, and use it as if they thought it good for nothing else.

Especially in them who confess it sacred.

48. And certainly this abuse in men that own the Bible, is infinitely more monstrous than in those who defy it: the latter look on it as a common thing, and use it as such: but for those who confess it sacred, thus to prostitute it, is a flat contradiction as much against the rules of Discourse as Religion: 'tis to offer the same abuse to Christ in his Word, which the rude soldiers did to his Person; to bow the knee before it, and yet expose it as an object of scorn and laughter. But sure there cannot be two things more inconsistent, than the avowing it to be dictated by God in order to the most important concern of man, and yet debase it to the vilest purposes; make it the drudge and hackney to our sportful humors, and bring it out as the Philistines did *Samson*, only to make us merry, *Judg.* 16. 25.

The terrours of the Lord are very improper subjects to raise mirth.

49. Indeed one would wonder how that should become a proper instrument for that purpose, that those doctrines of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come (every where scatter'd through that Book) which set heathen *Felix* a trembling, should set Christians a laughing: and yet should men cite the same things and phrases out of another Author, there would be no jest in it. It seems therefore that the spirit and essence of this sort of wit lies in the profaness. How absurd is it then for men that do not utterly abjure religion, to affect this impious sort of raillery, which has nothing but daring wickedness to recommend it? For certainly, of all the ways of discourse that ever pretended to wit, this has the least claim to it.

'Tis the meanest attempt at wit to repeat and misapply phrases and fragments of books.

50. What strength of reason, or height of fancy is there in repeating of phrases and fragments of Books, when what they would say, they might much more properly express in their words? In any other instances but this of the Bible, it would pass rather for a defect than an excess of wit. But that which I suppose renders it so taking, is, that it is the cheapest expedient for men to arrive to that reputation. Men that cannot go to the cost of any thing that is truly ingenious, can by this means immediately commence wits; if they can but charge their memories with half a dozen Texts, they need no other furniture for the trade: these mangled and transposed, will be ready at all turns, and render them applauded by those who have no other measures of wit, but its opposition to Piety. But would God, men would look a little before them; and consider what the final reckoning will be for such advertisements; and if the whole world be an unequal exchange for a soul, what a miserable Merchant is he that barters his for a bald insipid jest? such as a sober man would avoid were there no sin in it.

'Tis a vain excuse that what is done is in sport.

51. I know men are apt to flatter themselves, that these lighter frolicks will pass for nothing, so long as they do not seriously and maliciously oppose Gods word: but I fear they will find God in earnest, though they be in jest. He that has *magnified his word above all things*, Psal. 138. 2. cannot brook that we should make it vile and cheap, play and dally with it. And if it were a capital crime to convert any of the perfume of the Sanctuary to common use, *Exod.* 30. 32. can we think God can be pleas'd to see his more sacred Word, the theam of our giddy mirth, and have his own words ecchoed to him in profane drollery?

52. But

52. But besides 'tis to be consider'd that this wanton liberty is a step to the more solemn and deliberate contempt of Gods Word: custom do's strangely prescribe to us, and he that a while has us'd any thing irreverently, will at last bring his practice into argument, and conclude that there is no reverence due to it. God knows we are naturally too apt to slight and easy apprehensions of sacred things; and had need to use all Arts and instruments to impress an awe upon our minds.

This wanton liberty leads to contempt.

53. It will sure then be very unsafe for us to trifle with them, and by so undue a familiarity draw on that contempt which we should make it our care to avoid. The Wise-man says, *He that contemns small things, shall fall by little and little*, Eccl. 19. 1. And though no degree of irreverence towards God or his Word, can be call'd a small thing absolutely consider'd, yet comparatively with the more exorbitant degrees it may: and yet that smaller is the seed and parent of the greatest. It is so in all sins, the kingdom of Satan, like that of God, may be compar'd to a *grain of mustard seed*, Mat. 13. 31. which though little in it self, is mighty in its increase.

'Tis wisdom not to despise small things, especially where God and our souls are concern'd.

54. No man ever yet began at the top of villany, but the advance is still gradual from one degree to another; each commission smoothing and glibbing the way to the next. He that accustoms in ordinary discourse, to use the sacred name of God with as little sentiment and reverence, as he do's that of his neighbour or servant; that makes it his common by-word, and cries Lord and God upon every the lightest occasion of exclamation or wonder, this man has a very short step to the using it in oaths, and upon all frivolous occasions; and he that swears vainly, is at no great distance from swearing falsly. It is the same in this instance of the Scriptures: He that indulges his wit to rally with them, will soon come to think them such tame things that he may down-right scorn them: And when he is arriv'd to that, then he must pick quarrels to justify it, till at last he arrives even to the height of enmity.

No man is perfectly wicked at first.

55. Let every man therefore take heed of setting so much as one step in this fatal circle; guard himself against the first insinuation of this guilt: and when a jest offers it self as a temptation, let him balance that with a sober thought, and consider whether the jest can quit the cost of the profanation. Let him possess his mind with an habitual awe, take up the Bible with solemner thoughts, and other kind of apprehensions than any human Author: and if he habituate himself to this reverence, every clause and phrase of it that occurs to his mind, will be apter to excite him to devout ejaculations than vain laughter.

The earliest caution is the best.

56. It is reported of our excellent Prince King *Edward* the sixth; that when in his Councel Chamber, a Paper that was call'd for, happen'd to lie out of reach, and the Person concern'd to produce it, took a Bible that lay by, and standing upon it reach'd down the Paper: the King observing what was done, ran himself to the place, and taking the Bible in his hands, kissed it, and laid it up again. Of this it were a very desirable moral, that Princes, and all persons in authority, would take care not to permit any to raise themselves by either a hypocritical or profane trampling upon holy things. But besides that, a more general application offers it self; that all men of what condition soever, should both themselves abstain from every action that has the appearance of a contempt of the Holy Scripture; and also when they observe it in others, discountenance the insolence: and by their words and actions, give testimony of the veneration which they have for that holy Book, they see others so wretchedly despise.

An instance of the Piety of K. Edward the sixth.

57. But above all, let him who reads the Scripture, seriously set himself to the practice of it, and daily examine how he proceeds in it: he that diligently do's this, will not be much at leisure to sport with it: he will scarce meet with a text which will not give him cause of reflection, and provide him work within his own breast: every duty injoyn'd will prompt him to examine how he has perform'd; every sin forbid, will call him to recollect how guilty he has been; every pathetick strain of Devotion will kindle his zeal, and at least upbraid his coldness; every heroick example will excite his emulation. In a word, every part of Scripture will, if duly apply'd, contribute to some good and excellent end. And when a thing is proper for such noble purposes, can it be the part of a wise man to apply it only to mean and trivial? Would any but an Idiot waste that Soveraign Liquor in the washing of his feet, which was given him to expel poison from his heart? And are not we guilty of the like folly when we apply God's Word to serve only a ludicrous humor: and make our selves merry with that which was design'd for the most serious and most important purpose, the salvation of our souls. And indeed whoever takes any lower aim than that and the vertues preparatory to it in his study of Scripture, extremely debases it.

'Twill be of great importance to examine our progress.

Rrr 2 58 Let

The promises of Scripture are not to be attain'd but by the observations of its Precepts.

58. Let us therefore keep a steady eye upon that mark, and press towards it as the Apostle did; *Phil.* 3. 14. *walk by that rule* the Holy Scripture proposes; faithfully and diligently observe its precepts, that we may finally partake its promises. To this end continually pray we, in the words of our holy Mother the Church, unto Almighty God, who has caus'd all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning: that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of his holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting Life, which he has given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.